Strategic Interventions for
Community Change

Communities at Work

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PUBLIC
EDUCATION
NETWORK

Public involvement. Public education. Public benefit.

Public Education Network

Public Education Network is a national organization of local education funds and individuals working to improve public schools and build citizen support for quality public education in low-income communities across the nation. PEN believes an active, vocal constituency is the key to ensuring that every child, in every community, benefits from a quality public education. PEN and its members are building public demand and mobilizing resources for quality public education on behalf of 11 million children in more than 1,200 school districts in 34 states and the District of Columbia.

Local Education Funds

Local education funds, established in 1983 with funding from the Ford Foundation, are leaders in school reform—dedicated to increasing student achievement and building broad-based public support for quality public education. LEFs advocate for *involvement* by all segments of the public in public education, for *accountability* and achievement of high standards by everyone involved with public education, and for significant *improvement* in the quality of public education. LEFs generate *resources* for public education by facilitating investments from local governments, businesses, and philanthropic foundations.

Dear Education Advocate:

John Adams once noted that the education of a nation should not be confined to schools and universities that instruct the few. Rather, education "must become the national care and expense for the formation of the many."

Public schools help us transmit the values and knowledge children will need to become well educated, contributing members of our democracy. So it is everyone's responsibility to make sure all children receive a quality education in our public schools—by voting for candidates who support quality schools and the needs of children; by paying taxes and ensuring that tax dollars are used to help all children succeed; and by becoming informed on issues that influence the academic success of all students.

Local education funds (LEFs) have played a central role in improving our nation's public schools, and this year we celebrate 20 years of LEF advocacy and achievement. For the past two decades, LEFs have been working to build community understanding of education reform issues—and to build community capacity to improve public institutions—through dialogue, constituency building, engagement, collaboration, policy analysis, litigation, and youth engagement.

LEFs have used these strategic interventions to raise billions of dollars for education reform. They have launched thousands of professional development programs to help teachers gain and improve instructional capacity. They have led groundbreaking initiatives to create small schools, introduce higher standards, and improve teacher quality. They have participated in precedent-setting legal cases on finance equity and in successful bond referenda campaigns. Perhaps most important, LEFs have used these strategic interventions to connect members of their communities to their public institutions, bring them together to define a vision for their public schools, and mobilize them to carry out that vision.

We hope this guide, published with the generous support of MetLife Foundation, will help you understand the power of these interventions and enhance your ability to integrate them into your work. Together, we are moving inevitably closer to the day when every child in America benefits from a quality education.

Wendy D. Puriefoy
President
Public Education Network

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Strategic Interventions for Community Change

What does it look like when parents, business leaders, taxpayers, and other community members take responsibility for public education? *Communities at Work* takes a look at strategies that have been used to build public responsibility for public education in communities across the country.

Before people can demand change—and hold themselves and policymakers accountable for making and sustaining change—they must first engage in a process of identifying problems and the actions to be taken. Framing a problem is an important part of engaging people in collaborative action. Understanding what action to take, and how to mobilize and deploy appropriate resources, helps build community capacity to address problems and challenges. Local education funds (LEFs) have helped their communities carry out this process through the following strategic interventions:

- Community Dialogue
- Constituency Building
- Engaging Practitioners
- Collaborating with Districts
- Policy Analysis & Agenda Development
- Legal Strategies
- Youth Engagement

These interventions are dynamic components of a systematic approach to collective problem solving. Because of their natural overlap, they are not meant to be implemented in isolation. Individually, they represent various ways to engage communities in defining problems and demanding action. Together, they help develop the synergy and momentum needed to create lasting change.

This guide describes each intervention and gives examples of how the interventions have been employed in various communities. However, no one group of stakeholders can implement all interventions and no one organization, no matter how well organized or how representative of the community, can create systemic change by itself. LEFs have been both leaders of change and participants in change. This changing role is an important characteristic of the relationships and norms that sustain long-term community change.

How the Guide Is Organized

The guide is designed to build understanding of strategic interventions and create the capacity to deploy them. Each section includes the following components:

- A description of the intervention
- Lessons learned
- Examples of LEF work
- Tools
- Resources

COMMUNITY DIALOGUE

Dialogue that is public, and structured, produces action-oriented outcomes that respond to community needs.

If citizens are to define a vision for their public schools, they must come together to articulate their beliefs, goals, and areas of shared understanding. Such dialogue gives citizens a way to arrive at goals for their public schools, and for their communities, and to develop plausible strategies for achieving those goals.

Dialogue encompasses strategic planning, town meetings, education roundtables, and other ways to seek meaningful input from and conversation among stakeholders. It provides the community a mechanism for discovering how the public education system works, for identifying data that demonstrates how effective the system is, and for determining the elements of a quality education.

Local education funds often serve as dialogue conveners and facilitators, not simply to advance a point of view, but to broaden the diversity of those involved in decision making and committed to common goals. In many instances, dialogue raises expectations for change and convinces people of the need to take specific action.

But just talking is not enough; public dialogue must be a structured process to produce action-oriented outcomes. LEFs must move communities from talk to action and get key stakeholders involved at appropriate times. In playing this role, LEFs are often called upon to mediate divisive conversations and help stakeholders find areas of agreement on issues and action steps. With a common understanding, community residents can begin the process of improving their public schools.

LESSONS LEARNED

Articulate the problem. The specific problem or issue must be clearly defined at the outset of dialogue so that participants can stay focused on the issue.

Identify barriers before pursuing solutions. Too often, solutions are offered before barriers have been scrutinized. Barriers must be identified, understood, and analyzed before solutions can be determined.

Engage all sectors of the community. Ensure that a broad range of community groups and residents, particularly those that have not spoken out in the past, have a chance to participate in community dialogue and become part of the solution. This is especially important when tackling topics with a history of deep-seated divisions.

Be open about areas of agreement and disagreement. Acknowledging differences moves the process forward and keeps the conversation open and honest. Aim for deeper understanding of the challenges rather than consensus on specific solutions.

Use existing ties with schools and community programs. Students, administrators, teachers, and residents are more likely to participate in dialogue if they know and trust the group organizing it.

Follow up dialogue with action-oriented steps. Participants are more likely to make and keep commitments if they have specific steps to take in addressing the issues raised during community dialogue.

Organizing Dialogue in Rural Areas

Mary Lyon Education Fund, Shelburne Falls, MA

Challenge

In rural areas, distance often separates people from one another and from their community institutions. In addition, rural areas have fewer stakeholder groups and fewer venues in which to engage stakeholders; the long distances from home to meeting sites make it less likely that people will attend community functions.

Taken together, these factors demand a creative approach to community dialogue in rural areas. With a nine-town regional school district, few community centers, and a large low-income population, Mary Lyon Education Fund (MLEF) had to develop innovative ways to get residents' opinions on and perceptions of the situations that the children in these communities face in and out of school.

Strategic Intervention

With few prospects for gathering residents in large community forums or other traditional dialogue venues, the Mary Lyon Education Fund designed a data gathering process by which volunteers could engage residents in meaningful dialogue wherever they naturally congregate—at school open houses, at the library, at health board meetings, in grocery stores, even at the town dump.

LEF Work

MLEF formed a needs assessment team composed of six teams of community volunteers, one team for each of the six surrounding geographic areas. The volunteers received training in collecting qualitative data, and were given information about the residents and the organizations in the communities where they would conduct interviews. The same consultant who trained the volunteers provided them with coaching support throughout their six weeks in the field.

"We got a real slice of life by going to places where people normally talk to each other," says Susan Silvester, executive director of MLEF. With clipboards in hand at everyday locations, the volunteers often reached people who might not have attended a large community meeting because of transportation, childcare, and other issues. The one-on-one and small-group dialogues took place in a variety of everyday locations:

- Board of health meetings
- Board of assessors meetings
- School committee meetings
- School classrooms/open houses
- PTO meetings
- Principal forums
- Kiwanis meetings
- Playgrounds
- Town dump
- Public libraries
- Post offices
- Food bank
- Senior centers
- Grocery stores

The enthusiasm for the conversations was contagious: When a volunteer was interviewing someone, other people would frequently join in the conversation to talk about their experiences and ask, "What about this? What about that?" This ripple effect involved many more residents in the dialogues.

The teams were also able to reach decision makers by going to small community meetings, such as the board of library trustees. "We tied the conversations to their existing agenda rather than reinventing the wheel," says Silvester.

In addition to in-person dialogues, MLEF invited feedback via a survey posted on its website. According to Silvester, the most important ingredient of the dialogue process was its mission-driven nature. "We had a purpose—to learn from residents what the most pressing needs were in their community, and what was needed to address those needs."

Results

More than 1,400 residents discussed the quality of education and the supports for youth and families in their communities. A clear picture of community needs and assets emerged from data compiled from these dialogues and from other sources. Community members and agencies then engaged in brainstorming and problem solving to find solutions to immediate needs.

The engagement effort led to the development of the Nine Town Community Partnership, a partnership of agencies and businesses in the nine-town area, the LEF, the school district, and agencies outside the area as well. The partnership is addressing the major issues that surfaced during the community assessment process, namely, the availability of and access to youth development opportunities, accessibility to healthcare for families, and discrimination and harassment of students by their peers.

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Community Solutions for Closing the Achievement Gap

Durham Public Education Network, Durham, NC

Challenge

For years, there has been a 30-point difference between the reading and math scores of white and Asian students and the scores of African-American and Latino students in Durham, NC. Durham Public Education Network (DPEN) decided to tackle this achievement gap by facilitating community dialogue and building public responsibility.

The achievement gap had to be assessed in the context of a long history of contentious racial division. DPEN used student performance data to spotlight achievement disparities and the interventions needed to help all children succeed. The dialogue process also had to bring a diverse, and often polarized, community together to reach agreement on how these interventions could be implemented.

Strategic Intervention

Durham Public Education Network staffers and board members believed the only way to improve the achievement gap was to involve members of the Durham community in crafting solutions. DPEN set out to meet this challenge by facilitating a community-wide dialogue of community leaders with the goal of building trust, agreement, and, ultimately, a community commitment to improve public education in Durham.

LEF Work

DPEN began the dialogue process by organizing a conference of 70 community leaders from diverse backgrounds to examine the long history of division between whites and African Americans in Durham, and how the present-day community could begin to talk about the achievement gap.

DPEN next organized opportunities for community-wide dialogue. At a kickoff event in February 2001, more than 200 local residents met in small groups to discuss community assets, obstacles, and priorities for closing the achievement gap. Fifteen Community Participation Teams were formed, each with approximately 10 members. These racially diverse teams met three times; a trained facilitator participated in every meeting, helping the team members understand school data, discuss possible causes of the achievement gap, and explore actions the community might take. The teams identified five conditions that impact achievement:

- Parental involvement and support
- High expectations for all students
- Academic and social support services
- Early childhood learning opportunities
- Teacher quality, retention, and support

DPEN hosted a follow-up education summit in May 2001, where members of the community devised a list of actions relating to the five conditions. The actions ranged from individual commitments to tutor students to organizational investment in early childhood education.

Though the forums raised "raw, tough issues," DPEN was able to structure opportunities for conversation and action planning that engaged residents in defining problems, solutions, priorities, and their role in implementing solutions.

Kay James, DPEN's executive director, compares the role that DPEN played as the instigator and facilitator of Durham's community conversations to that of a juggler. "It's very difficult to keep all the balls in the air. DPEN has to be the group that keeps the momentum going by aligning and linking the resources that support the Durham public schools' plan to close the achievement gap by 2007."

James believes people need tangible proof that what they are doing is working. "We need indicators of success, to recognize the collaborative efforts and successes of the many groups who participate, and to stay focused on education as a priority."

Results

With efforts to close the gap underway, Durham residents are seeing evidence of success. Recent test results for students in Durham public schools showed marked improvement for African-American and Latino students. The achievement gap narrowed by seven points in 2002 alone.

As part of the ongoing effort to close the gap, DPEN asked community leaders to sign a "covenant for education" that commits them to working in partnership with local organizations and the public schools, and to coordinating and sharing their resources for the benefit of all Durham public school students. To date, over 300 community leaders have signed the covenant, and a volunteer task force is working with the Durham schools to build community-school relationships.

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Tools

Facilitating Dialogue Across Multiple Counties
HC*EXCELL – The Education Foundation, Hamblen County, TN

HC*EXCELL – The Education Foundation, the local education fund in Hamblen County, TN, used the PBS documentary *SCHOOL: The Story of American Public Education* as a springboard for its 15-month community dialogue process.

HC*EXCELL received technical assistance from Roundtable Media, a New York City-based media organization, to organize community dialogues in 10 counties by using a preview tape of *SCHOOL* and a locally developed questionnaire on local public education issues.

Approximately 550 students, parents, representatives of business and industry, senior citizens, teachers, school administrators, public officials, and representatives of community-based organizations participated in more than 30 forums over a period of 18 months. They identified community strengths and common areas of concern and agreed to work together to build a strong educational and economic future for their communities.

Key Elements of the Dialogue Process

- To reach a broad range of stakeholders in the 10-county area, HC*EXCELL developed partnerships with the local chamber of commerce, Wayne State Community College, a state technology institute, and the local PBS station.
- The coalition partners made presentations and designed, marketed, and distributed materials in the 10-county area. The national *SCHOOL* brochure was customized by HC*EXCELL to include information on the local campaign.
- Trained, impartial facilitators encouraged participants to talk and kept the conversations on track.
- The 20-minute preview tape for *SCHOOL: The Story of American Public Education* provided an overview of the complex and controversial history of public education.
- A questionnaire was developed, asking respondents for their affiliation—teacher, administrator, parent, senior citizen, business, industry, public official—and for answers to the following five questions:
    1. On a scale of 1 to 10, how important do you think public education is today?
    2. How should our community fund public education?
    3. What do you see as the strengths and weaknesses of your community's school system?

4. If you could change one thing about your school system, what would it be?
5. How could you participate in improving education in your community?

Dialogue Format

Each community dialogue incorporated the following elements:

- Introductions
- The 20-minute *SCHOOL* preview tape is screened
- Participants share reactions to the tape, followed by discussion of how to improve the quality of public education in the community, with all ideas recorded
- Participants complete questionnaire
- Additional comments are invited; blank cards are distributed

Results

HC*EXCELL, with the support of Public Education Network and a consultant-evaluator, published *Building a Knowledge Community,* a summary of the discussions and the resulting recommendations for actions. The report was distributed to participating Hamblen County organizations, which were then invited to discuss the findings at a luncheon hosted by Walters State Community College and the *Citizen Tribune,* the local newspaper. The *Citizen Tribune* also published a three-part series about the engagement process and its findings.

Several new youth development projects emerged out of the dialogue, including opportunities for high school students to shadow professionals, and a partnership between the parks department and the local housing authority to provide recreational activities for local students.

HC*EXCELL is helping to form a steering committee to create a Hamblen County P–16 Council, a public/private partnership focused on education improvement initiatives, including promoting public awareness of the link between an educated citizenry and a healthy economy.

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Building Understanding of Education Reform

Schools of the 21st Century, Detroit, MI

Schools of the 21st Century, the local education fund in Detroit, MI, has created Leadership Schools—clusters of school-centered communities that identify promising reform practices, along with existing practices that need improvement, and then implement comprehensive school improvement plans.

Schools of the 21st Century plays an important role in the change process taking place in Detroit by facilitating community dialogue to help parents, practitioners, and residents understand education reform issues. They employ the following community dialogue tools:

- Biannual, half-day forums that introduce reform issues to approximately 300–400 residents and facilitate small-group discussion
- A website, www.s21c-detroit.org, featuring resources tailored for parents, students, administrators, and teachers and electronic mechanisms for dialogue, such as online polls and discussion boards
- An annual report to the community with updates on reform accomplishments
- Publications to help parents understand the reform efforts and introduce practitioners to promising practices

The forums and other outreach strategies are "part of building a constituency for public education. People won't support reform if they don't understand it," explains Pamela James, executive director of Schools of the 21st Century.

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Managing Conversations: Tips for Facilitators

Prepare for success. Much of the work required to structure a good meeting happens before the meeting ever starts. Objectives and a clear agenda for reaching them should be defined beforehand. Make sure the venue supports the meeting objectives and provides participants with a comfortable environment. Provide ample food and beverage and offer periodic breaks.

Start the session with energy. Inform, excite, empower, and involve participants. Get participants to talk early—even if only to introduce themselves and say what they hope to get out of the day. Set ground rules for discussion for the group.

Engage participants. Get their input, and note their reactions to the topics being discussed. Be sensitive to nonverbal communication; look for signs that participants are either ready to move on, need further clarification, or need a break.

Track the conversation. Use a flip chart to record what has been said. Build on comments by linking ideas to previous statements. Expect differences in opinion. Do not disregard any part of the conversation or, conversely, allow someone to dominate the discussion. Watch time carefully. Keep the energy up and the conversation moving.

Engage participants in next steps. Let them know they have helped move the solution or discussion forward. Explain what will happen before the next meeting and keep participants engaged. Disseminate notes on the key themes and questions that arise during the meeting and encourage informal discussions between meetings.

These tips were expanded from discussion guides developed by the Edna McConnnell Clark Foundation and Collaborative Communications Group.

Resources

Public Agenda

Technical support for public engagement efforts through workshops, research, forums, focus groups, and opinion surveys. Public Agenda's Town Meeting Framework—the format used to conduct dialogues in PEN's Education and Race initiative—is based on small, moderated group discussions of approximately 15 people, centered on understanding different perspectives and exchanging points of view.

Public Agenda ▪ 212 686 6610 ▪ www.publicagenda.org

National Issues Forums

A network of civic and educational organizations that promotes citizen deliberation through public forums. Facilitated discussions use a preset framework of discussion options and materials designed to build shared public understanding. The NIF Institute helps organizations conduct Public Policy Institutes, workshops that train citizens to convene and moderate National Issues Forums.

National Issues Forums (NIF) ▪ 800 433 7834 ▪ www.nifi.org

Study Circles

An informal, effective way to support adult learning and social change based on "small-group, democratic, highly participatory discussions." Circles vary in size from 5 to 15 people, with each group deciding how frequently it will meet. Discussion leaders ask questions, identify key points, and manage the group process. Complex issues are broken down into manageable categories and controversial topics are dealt with in depth.

Study Circles Resource Center ▪ 860 928 2616 ▪ www.studycircles.org

Future Search Conferences

Two-and-a-half-day planning meetings that help large, diverse groups discover values, purposes, and projects they have in common. Conference participants work on a task-focused agenda to find common goals and develop actions to meet those goals.

Resources for Human Development, Inc. ▪ 800 951 6333 ▪ www.futuresearch.net

Citizens Jury

A randomly selected, demographically representative panel that meets for four to five days to examine an issue of public significance. The jury, which typically numbers about 18 people, hears from expert witnesses and deliberates the issue. On the final day of the hearings, jury members present their recommendations to the public and to policymakers.

The Jefferson Center ▪ 612 926 3292 ▪ www.jefferson-center.org/citizens_jury.htm

Community Dialogue **References**

Reconnecting Communities and Schools

A program focused on relationships between communities and their public schools. Local steering committees—comprising business leaders, educators, local residents, and community leaders—organize and implement initiatives through an engagement process designed to produce community-wide agreement on action steps to be taken. Materials and technical support are provided by The Harwood Institute.

The Harwood Institute for Public Innovation ▪ 301 656 3669 ▪ www.theharwoodinstitute.org

Roundtable Media

Technical assistance for producers of media events that enhance and support public engagement.

Roundtable Media ▪ 781 893 3336 ▪ www.roundtablemedia.com

Exploring Quality Teaching

An 11-minute video on quality teaching used in a series of Chattanooga community forums in which more than 200 citizens pondered this question: "What must our community do to have a quality teacher in every classroom?" Quality teaching is discussed from the perspectives of parents, students, educators, and the business community.

Public Education Foundation ▪ 423 265 9403 ▪ tqasst@pefchattanooga.org

Quality Now! Results of National Conversations on Education and Race

Guidelines for conducting conversations based on conversations in eight communities, with tools and resources for the following activities:

- Planning conversations
- Conducting research using data on schools and students
- Engaging the public to attract diverse participants and elicit candid responses
- Publicizing the conversations and their outcomes
- Evaluating the conversations
- Continuing the dialogue

Public Education Network ▪ 202 628 7460 ▪ www.PublicEducation.org/pdf/qualitynow.pdf

Do Public Schools Fail Girls? A New Look at Gender Equity

Examples of how 10 local education funds engaged their communities in dialogue on issues of gender equity, and translated that dialogue into action.

Public Education Network ▪ 202 628 7460 ▪ www.PublicEducation.org/pdf/Lessons/Do_Public_Schools_Fail_Girls.pdf

CONSTITUENCY BUILDING

Strong alliances are built on the willingness of individual members to take concerted, collective action.

Community-based efforts to foster improvement in public schools often entail the creation of constituencies—families, youth, educators, businesses, policymakers, civic groups—to advocate for specific educational reforms. Building these constituencies requires the community to develop the capacity to identify concerns, demand change, understand how change is enacted, and then promote a collective responsibility for change. Empowered community constituencies are able to shape public discourse and demand accountability from public officials and policymakers.

Advocacy, as embodied in the examples presented in *Communities at Work,* entails developing alliances and talent to influence policymakers and voters. Successful advocacy requires increasing the number of people behind an effort and developing their capacity to educate others about the issues at hand. This constituency building often happens through grassroots organizing: face-to-face meetings, door-to-door canvassing, house and church meetings open to the public, and get-out-the-vote campaigns. Local education funds can contribute to the process by identifying, supporting, and collaborating with community organizers adept at building and strengthening constituencies.

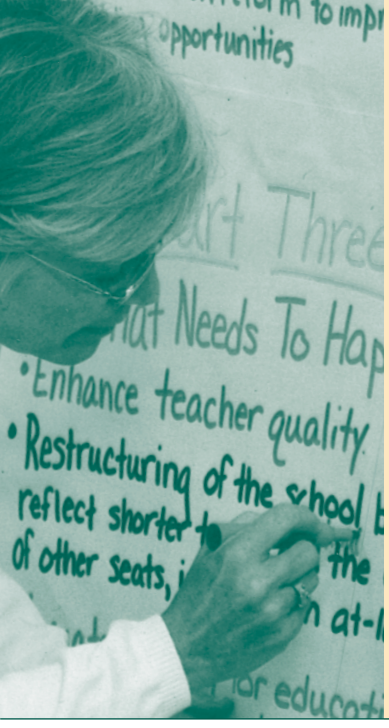
LESSONS LEARNED

Involve committed, visionary leaders. Leaders set the tone and rally participants to remain involved. When key community leaders are committed to a process, people are more likely to stay with the process and bring others in to help.

Develop a collective voice. Strong alliances among stakeholder groups are essential for concerted, collective action. A constituency is only as powerful as the willingness of its members to take action.

Be as inclusive as possible. Stay vigilant and be creative in efforts to include a broad range of constituencies. Continue to ask, "Do we have everybody we need at the table?" When determining strategies that affect students, it is especially important to have all community entities that work with children and youth involved in the process.

Be patient and respectful. People need time to coalesce around new ideas and concepts.



Building a Constituency for Equity and Excellence

Mobile Area Education Foundation, Mobile, AL

Challenge

The citizens of Mobile County had not had an increase in local school funding in more than 40 years. When a school tax referendum finally passed in 2001, the Mobile Area Education Foundation (MAEF) used the momentum from the referendum to launch community conversations, partnerships with education reform organizations, and a community-wide strategic planning process. The goal: to build public ownership of public schools, leading to increased equity throughout the school system and greater accountability for student outcomes.

Because the school system had been underfunded for years, it had lost connection to and support from the community. Even with the new infusion of support from the tax referendum, the school system had to reconnect with its stakeholders to develop a community vision of excellence for the public schools, and to build a constituency to act on that vision and sustain long-term improvement.

Strategic Intervention

Through its Yes We Can initiative, which used the Harwood Reconnecting Communities and Schools framework, Mobile Area Education Foundation engaged Mobile County residents in an examination of their belief in public education, how to strengthen that belief, and how to build their accountability for providing all children with a sound education.

LEF Work

In September 2001, MAEF launched a three-year project to create a coalition of informed citizens to demand higher standards for and greater accountability from public schools. MAEF and the Yes We Can team conducted an extensive campaign engaging more than 1,700 citizens in approximately 50 community conversations during a 14-week period in 20 Mobile County neighborhoods and towns.

These conversations generated a community agreement that summarized the ideas and aspirations of Mobile area residents for reconnecting the community to its public schools. A Community Advisory Team conducted another round of community conversations to get feedback on the agreement, and citizen-led action teams began an in-depth study of the priorities identified during the community conversations.

Using the impetus of the federal *No Child Left Behind Act,* and motivated by the Yes We Can Community Agreement, MAEF joined forces with the Mobile County School Board to develop a performance-based strategic plan for the school district. In doing so, the school board demonstrated its commitment to the five priorities identified in the Yes We Can Community Agreement:

- Student achievement
- Quality leadership
- Governance
- Equity
- Communications/parental and community involvement

The community-wide strategic planning process integrates criteria for performance excellence from the Baldrige National Quality Program with priorities identified in the Yes We Can Community Agreement. The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools has designated the Baldrige award criteria as the most rigorous and effective model for reshaping school districts to create high performance results.

Results

The combination of a strategic planning process and the use of Baldrige performance criteria has transformed the school district into a data-driven system for the first time in its history. Each division and school has 30-, 60-, and 90-day improvement plans in place, and the school system is moving toward a needs-based budgeting system.

More Mobile area residents are taking action on behalf of public education and community change. A new culture is emerging, one moving from a mindset where "nothing can happen" to an attitude of "maybe I can do something to help."

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Averting a Fiscal Crisis

Portland Schools Foundation, Portland, OR

Challenge

In the spring of 2003, the Oregon legislature failed to pass a budget that would have adequately funded public schools in that state and put the Portland public school system in the position of having to cut five weeks out of the school year. The most expedient solution to the budget crisis: a countywide referendum to increase local taxes in order to fund public schools and other threatened social and public safety services.

But in a county with high unemployment, a high personal income tax rate, and wealthy areas able to raise money to compensate for the state budget shortfall, mobilizing a broad-based constituency to support a tax increase was a difficult challenge. For the Portland Schools Foundation (PSF) to be successful in this endeavor, it had to organize diverse constituencies willing to support a common goal.

Strategic Intervention

To mobilize constituents to support the tax increase referendum, the Portland Schools Foundation worked to educate stakeholders and residents about the financial realities of local public schools, convened key allies, developed strategies, raised money to support the education referendum campaign, and got residents to the polls in what turned out to be a historic voter turnout in Portland.

LEF Work

PSF identified key allies for the referendum campaign, to include groups with whom the foundation had not previously worked. Executive Director Cynthia Guyer and her staff met with parent leaders from a number of middle- and upper-income schools to discuss the ramifications of the referendum. The schools these parents represented were not feeling the fiscal pinch to the same degree as low-income schools, primarily because they had the ability to raise private money for teacher salaries. "We wanted to educate them…and show them that political action was a more strategic approach that would give more bang for the buck," Guyer says.

PSF next brought campaign strategists to a meeting of approximately 60 school leaders to make the case that they should support the tax measure and get parents in their schools to support it as well. "We really worked hard to engage this key constituency," Guyer notes. "We reached out to many people who would normally oppose a tax increase…and many of them worked to raise money for the campaign."

PSF has a mailing list of 30,000–40,000 people who have supported the foundation since it was founded in 1994; each person on that list received two Get-Out-the-Vote postcards. PSF was also a visible presence during community discussions on why this measure was so critical to Portland's future. In addition, the foundation raised $150,000 to help pay for the referendum campaign.

Guyer is quick to point out that PSF was not alone in conducting the organizing and mobilization efforts that took place during the campaign. "The key to winning the campaign was the number of grassroots community groups that got involved: Stand for Children, Parents for Public Schools, and the Portland Schools Alliance, which organizes parent leaders in high-poverty schools. The teachers union was also a huge contributor to getting the vote out. You could never have passed this measure in this economy if you didn't have everyone working the bases. It was really a team effort."

Results

On May 20, 2003, by a solid 57 percent majority, voters in Multnomah County passed a 1.25 percent personal income tax increase to support schools, social services, and jails. In achieving that goal, the foundation developed the following recipe for success:

- **Work your base.** Every vote is important, so use mailing lists of partner organizations to contact a critical mass of voters, especially right before voting day.
- **Pay attention to unorganized groups.** Reach out to disenfranchised groups—including poor and minority parents and those whose native language is not English—and help them register to vote.
- **Find new allies.** Develop a relationship with the business community, especially when the issue is raising taxes; having the support of this community sector will be all-important in winning the vote. It is also important to develop relationships with middle- and upper-income parents who might otherwise oppose tax increases since they can provide private funds to the schools their children attend.

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Tools

Using School Budgets to Build a Constituency

The Alliance for Quality Education, Greenville, SC

The Alliance for Quality Education believes that the more informed community members are about the Greenville County Public School budget, the more likely they will become involved in improving the local schools. The best way to inform the community, concluded an eight-member committee of Greenville community stakeholders, is to produce a fact-based community guide to the school budget and budget process. The committee employed the following mechanisms in creating the guide:

Focus Groups. The committee used professionally run focus groups to discover the extent of understanding/misunderstanding about the school budget, and the kind of information residents would need in the guide. A key determinant in the success of the focus groups was the use of a trained facilitator—a local university professor expert in school finance issues—who probed residents for their perceptions about the budget. Focus group participants were asked to review and give input on drafts of the guide. Ultimately, involving residents in the process helped to create broad-based buy-in for the project and increase community awareness of the Alliance.

Format. The guide had to be succinct. The original 22-page draft was pared down to a more manageable 12-page version. The sections of the guide respond to questions asked in the focus groups:

- Who is paying the bill?
- Where does the money go?
- What does the budget process look like?
- Why are there rich schools and poor schools?
- What does the budget buy us?

The guide closes with a "How can I help?" section, which sends a message of action and community responsibility and reinforces the original intent of the guide, namely, to get more people involved in improving local public schools.

Guiding Principles. At the outset, the committee defined eight guiding principles to help the group stay true to its objectives during the nine months it took to plan, research, and write the guide. One of the guiding principles—to produce a fact-based report, without opinions—reflected the committee's conscious decision not to offer interpretations and recommendations in the guide.

Distribution. A key audience for the guide was 7,000 school district employees, many of whom said the guide helped them understand the budget more clearly than did any other tool. Partnering with the local newspaper, the alliance distributed the guide to 85,000 newspaper subscribers, and it continues to reinforce the importance of understanding the school budget by presenting the guide at community group gatherings.

Results

An eight-member volunteer committee met every week for nine months. Committee members brought significant financial expertise to the task, and their work yielded a more comprehensive, accurate guide than the alliance could have produced on its own.

The local media became a partner early in the project. Journalists who had reported extensively on the school budget gave the committee input. When the guide was complete, the newspaper printed it, enclosed it as an insert, and ran several stories about it.

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The Right Question Project: Helping Parents Become Advocates

Paterson Education Fund, Paterson, NJ

The Right Question Project (RQP) provides training and strategies to increase parental participation in the democratic process. It builds upon the strengths of people traditionally marginalized in the decision-making processes that affect them and their children's education. RQP participants acquire critical thinking and analytical skills to help them formulate their own questions, analyze how decisions are made, and determine how they can have a voice in shaping those decisions.

Paterson Education Fund in New Jersey has taken the RQP training module and tailored it to build constituencies of parents and community members able to advocate for good information about education concerns. Patterson uses the following techniques in its RQP workshops:

- Begin with leading questions to get participants into a questioning mode: "What is my child learning?" "What kinds of questions would you ask to get this information?"
- Create 10-question branches for each main question. For every 10 questions, create another 10 questions. This process of creating 100 questions helps participants get in the habit of asking questions and teaches them how to use questions to investigate problems or areas of concern.
- Learn the difference between closed (yes/no) questions and open-ended questions, and when to use each.
- Develop lists of action words to describe the many ways community members can support, monitor, and advocate for student achievement.

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Constituency Building **References**

Principles of Successful Community Organizing

- Create a participatory, democratic organization.
- Cull from various constituencies in the community to build a representative organization.
- Develop ongoing systems for community outreach—such as door-to-door outreach, house visits, and house meetings—that continue over the life of the community organizing effort.
- Keep a sense of momentum. Set a realistic timeline for activities.
- Treat participants as members, not as clients, so that members understand they have power to get things done. You want members to say, "We are the organization."
- Focus on leadership development. Identify potential leaders, bring them into the organization, and give them opportunities to develop their skills.
- Translate big problems into specific, tangible issues.
- Link specific education issues to broader community concerns. This way, members build credibility and power on small issues such that they can then sustain longer-term, more-difficult efforts on broader school reform issues.
- Develop an organizational staff accountable to members. Find the means to pay staff, including organizers.
- Create financial self-sufficiency through diverse sources of funding.

LEF Contributions to Community Organizing

- Access to powerbrokers, the business community, the school district administration, and school boards
- Access to data and research
- Expertise in education issues, connections to education schools at universities, and knowledge of national school reform programs that could be applied to local education issues
- Bringing credibility to organizing efforts that may otherwise be perceived as being outside the mainstream community

From a July 2001 address by Steve Kest, executive director of ACORN, to several local education funds about community organizing and the value LEFs bring to grassroots organizing efforts.

Resources

ACORN

The nation's largest community-organizing network, representing 125,000 African-American, white, and Latino families in 500 neighborhood chapters in 40 cities across the country. ACORN campaigns are designed to organize and mobilize low- and moderate-income people.

Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN) ▪ 718 246 7900 ▪ www.acorn.org

National Civic League

Fostering cross-sector collaboration and grassroots problem solving through Community Services Teams. Tools and skills, combined with innovative partnerships, help communities build civic leadership and generate citizen participation to create change. The teams help communities identify and address challenges.

National Civic League ▪ 303 571 4343 ▪ www.ncl.org

Industrial Areas Foundation

A national network of broad-based, multiethnic, interfaith organizations. The network provides leadership training to help citizens develop the competence and confidence needed to reorganize power and political relationships in their communities.

Texas Interfaith Education Fund ▪ 512 459 6551 ▪ www.communityschools.org/alliance.html

Strong Neighborhoods, Strong Schools

A report on the impact of community organizing on school reform and community capacity. School reform goes hand-in-hand with building strong communities.

Cross City Campaign ▪ 312 322 4880 ▪ www.crosscity.org/programs/indicators/findings.htm

Community Organizing for Urban School Reform

A case study of how working-class parents, public school teachers, clergy, social workers, business partners, and other engaged citizens have worked to improve their public schools, using the political organizing methods and tools from the Industrial Areas Foundation.

Shirley, Dennis. Community Organizing for Urban School Reform. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1997

Constituency Building **References**

Community Coalitions Manual
A comprehensive guide for establishing and sustaining coalition-based programs. Guidelines for volunteer recruitment, project planning, evaluation, fundraising, and public relations, along with contact information for more than 200 business, community service, education, equity, ethnic, and political organizations nationwide.
American Association of University Women ▪ 800 225 9998, ext. 528 ▪ www.aauw.org

Yes We Can Community Agreement
A community agreement that begins: "Here are our ideas for how to reconnect our community and public schools." Addressing priorities for school improvement in Mobile, AL, the agreement contains the community's vision for quality public schools and what the community can do to fulfill its aspirations.
Mobile Area Education Foundation ▪ 251 476 0002 ▪ www.maef.net/pages/maef-agreem.pdf

Community Guide to Understanding the Greenville County Public School Budget
A look at school budgets, and the budget process, from a layperson's perspective. The information provided covers how the budget process works, where the money comes from, and where the money goes.
The Alliance for Quality Education ▪ 864 233 4133 ▪ www.allianceforqualityed.org/downloads.html

School Finance Toolkit: How to Create a Community Guide to Your School District
Strategies and resources for assessing the equity of school funding mechanisms, and for creating a guide to help the community understand related issues.
Public Education Network ▪ 202 628 7460 ▪ www.PublicEducation.org/tools.asp

School Board Candidate, Who? Me?
A guide for potential school board candidates: "The choices our community makes at the polls will be important in determining what kind of schools we have in the future." The guide features 13 criteria for effective school board members, information on becoming a candidate, and requirements for office.
Nashville Public Education Foundation ▪ 615 354 9485 ▪ www.nashvillepef.org/grants/SchoolBoard.pdf

Key Work of School Boards
Tools and information for school board members for improving their leadership skills.
National School Boards Association ▪ 703 838 6722 ▪ www.nsba.org/keywork

ENGAGING PRACTITIONERS

Practitioner capacity is a critical factor in strengthening teaching and improving student achievement.

Engaging teachers, administrators, and school and district staff in public school improvement is as important as engaging community stakeholders external to the district. The people who work in and with schools have the greatest effect on the day-to-day implementation of any reform strategy.

Engaging practitioners—usually through reflective conversations or quality professional development—is crucial to strengthening teaching and student learning. In some cases, local education funds provide professional development directly to practitioners. In other cases, LEFs broker school/community partnerships and bring tools and resources to these partnerships. Through these efforts, educators become responsible for their own continued learning and learn to advocate for professional development support.

LESSONS LEARNED

Build coalitions within the school district. School districts often implement reform efforts in isolation. Coalitions with similar objectives can combine knowledge and resources for more strategic reform efforts.

Build partnerships with cultural organizations. Many local arts associations, historical societies, and museums provide educators with interdisciplinary learning and research opportunities. Teaming up with these organizations can enrich professional development opportunities at minimal cost to the school or district. Cultural organizations sometimes work with teachers to develop materials for a specific curriculum.

Build partnerships with institutions of higher education. Education professors are a source of research on student-centered learning and resource-based teaching. Invite them to facilitate workshops and participate in continuing education programs.

Build partnerships with public libraries.* Public libraries are obvious partners for developing strategies and providing services that improve student learning:

- Materials and activities complementing the curriculum
- Strategies for student support during periods of intense library use
- Summer reading lists
- Research techniques using electronic media
- Outreach to underserved populations and strategies to deliver needed services

Build partnerships with businesses. Businesses often have special expertise that can enrich professional development programs. Telecommunication and computer companies can provide training in new technologies and in gaining access to information through the Internet. Corporate human relations departments can provide team-building training and help schools manage the change process in the context of organizational culture.

** Lessons featured in* The Information-Powered School *(Hughes-Hassell, Sandra, and Anne Wheelock, eds.* The Information-Powered School. *Chicago, IL: Public Education Network and American Library Association, 2001.)*

Engaging Educators Through Professional Development

Public Education & Business Coalition, Denver, CO

Challenge

The Public Education & Business Coalition (PEBC)—a partnership of education, business, and community leaders—has a very ambitious goal: "To cultivate excellence in public schools so all students succeed in learning and in life." Improving the quality of teaching is a critical factor in achieving this mission.

But Denver faces challenges in improving teacher quality similar to those in other urban school districts: low rates of job satisfaction, high turnover rates for new teachers, and pressure to yield results in an environment of scarce resources and ever-changing policies. To address these challenges, PEBC relied on their long-established relationship with the Denver public school teachers.

Strategic Intervention

Since its inception in the early 1980s, Public Education & Business Coalition has used direct support for practitioners as a primary intervention for improving public schools and student performance. The organization concentrates more than half of its work on engaging educators through professional development.

LEF Work

PEBC's professional development focuses on in-depth, long-term support—typically in reading, writing, and math—for research-based instructional practices. Five National Staff Development Council standards shape the practices: results driven, job embedded, curriculum focused, standards based, and linked to classroom practice.

More than 30 PEBC staff developers work directly with teachers in schools as coaches in instructional practice. The professional development typically lasts three to five years, takes place 20 to 45 days each year, and is conducted in three phases:

- **Planning.** School staff members articulate a vision for the school they want to create and observe best practices through demonstration teaching and classroom observation.
- **Implementation.** PEBC staff developers encourage a cycle of continual learning by encouraging practitioners to experiment, revise, deliberate, and observe. Practitioners also co-teach, assess student work, and participate in collaborative networks.
- **Institutionalization.** Practitioners build ongoing support for change by reallocating time and resources in their buildings and by advocating for policy change at the school, district, and state levels.

PEBC extends its engagement of practitioners into the policy and community engagement aspects of its work. With grassroots experience and established credibility, PEBC continually brings information on and recommendations for effective teaching and learning practices into policy conversations. PEBC also helps the Denver community understand the importance of quality teaching to student performance.

"We are a catalyst for advocacy," says PEBC Executive Director Barbara Volpe. "We've chosen the classroom as our entry point for school reform—and tailored our other strategies to support the respectful relationship with practitioners that we've built over 20 years of working in schools."

PEBC works to institutionalize its professional development practice by demonstrating success and diversifying its funding base. Once a program proves successful and outside grant funding is no longer available, "the school district has often stepped up to recognize the value of the program and bear some of the expense of continuing it," says Volpe. PEBC also does fee-for-service work with schools and school districts. PEBC enters into a working relationship with a school—no matter what the source of funding—only when the school is ready to challenge the status quo and the school leadership can ensure that changes will be sustained.

Results

Teachers report that the hands-on assistance and in-depth support from PEBC staff developers enhance their sense of efficacy and increase their job satisfaction; in addition, students with teachers who received PEBC training made gains in test scores. PEBC has become a nationally recognized leader in staff development, as evidenced by the growing demand for its services in Colorado, along with national interest in its work.

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Bridging the Gap Between Practitioners and the Public

The Education Alliance, West Virginia

Challenge

West Virginia is a complex quilt of distinct communities and established constituencies. Its mountainous terrain separates communities from one another and tends to impede statewide change. Within communities, education stakeholders—teachers, administrators, parents, and residents—are also often isolated from one another. To address issues of teacher quality, The Education Alliance had to find ways to overcome these historical divisions and convince West Virginians that working together to improve student achievement was a major step forward in developing an educated workforce and improving the state's economy.

The Education Alliance needed innovative mechanisms to engage teachers and other stakeholders throughout the state. It had to develop approaches that would garner input and feedback, and then use that data to launch a statewide awareness-building campaign with a minimum of resources.

Strategic Intervention

Through PEN's teacher quality initiative, The Education Alliance—West Virginia's statewide education fund—took up the challenge of engaging practitioners and the public about teacher quality in a state with low levels of student achievement. The initiative was designed to engage the public in defining quality teaching and to influence state policy to improve it.

For the alliance, the initiative was an opportunity to involve teachers in defining the issues and designing solutions, and to help bridge the gap between teachers and the public. An earlier alliance research project on teacher quality did not involve educators; as a result, it was not able to create a constituency that could support change.

LEF Work

The alliance developed a process for engaging stakeholders statewide, with teachers at the forefront. Since teachers' unions represent a strong West Virginia constituency, the alliance sought support from the unions. During the design phase of the project, they also invited the heads of the state American Federation of Teachers and of National Education Association affiliates to sit on the project's steering committee.

During the planning phase, the alliance first sought to discover what teachers feel constitutes quality teaching by surveying 1,141 teachers from middle schools, junior high schools, and high schools in four counties. Similar surveys were then distributed in four other counties to broader stakeholder groups, including representatives of business, education, parents, community, school boards, administration, and students.

Findings from the broader stakeholder group surveys supported and validated the results of teacher surveys on the most important characteristics of quality teachers, the major factors influencing teacher quality, and the actions necessary to improve teacher quality in West Virginia. Teachers and other community representatives generally agreed on the attributes of quality teaching, but they did not feel there was enough trust and respect to work cooperatively to address the issues.

Results

The alliance has helped the community develop a shared understanding of quality teaching and the realization that, if they work together, quality teaching can be the norm for all students, in all classrooms. The alliance is making the voices of teachers and other constituent groups heard throughout the state through a series of opinion pieces sharing this important message with a broader audience.

The alliance is continuing to work on its teacher quality initiative by organizing community dialogues in counties across the state, developing leadership teams comprising teachers, students, parents, community residents, school board members, and administrators. In meetings designed to bridge the gaps between various constituencies, each leadership team is being asked to develop both solutions that can be implemented in its community and recommendations for changing state policy.

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Tools

Using the Quality Teaching Framework to Engage Practitioners
DC VOICE, Washington, DC

In Washington, DC, the Supports for Quality Teaching (SQT) framework serves as a springboard for focused conversations on the supports teachers need most. DC VOICE, a local education fund representing a collaborative of community partners, developed the SQT framework as a comprehensive, cohesive support system for quality teaching and learning. The framework addresses seven major support areas:

- Recruitment and hiring
- New teacher induction
- Professional development
- School-level administration
- Teaching and learning conditions
- Human resources
- Community involvement

All seven areas are given equal value in the framework, although community involvement sits at the center to underscore its importance in ensuring that conditions exist to support all areas.

Engaging Teachers

The framework helps shape productive discussions among practitioners about teaching conditions and supportive environments by anchoring conversations in a professional context.

Engaging teachers in conversations about the supports they need reinforces the role practitioners can play in shaping conditions for success in their schools. DC VOICE staff and partners presented the framework to teachers at several roundtable discussions and sought their feedback on the following key questions:

- How are you supported by your school, by the district, and by the community?
- What are your experiences/realities with areas reflected in the SQT framework?
- Which area(s) are the most important to lasting change in establishing citywide supports for quality teaching? Why?
- What role can you and other teachers play in generating support for quality teaching?

Results

The SQT framework is helping DC teachers articulate what they need. For example, teachers identified induction as a priority support area. DC VOICE then formed working groups composed of teachers, community-based organizations, and two local universities and designed an induction program in partnership with the DC public schools. Program elements, which incorporate findings from national and local research, are reflected in the redesign of mentor selection and training, and in collaborative planning, and integrate the best thinking of internal and external partners.

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Helping Teachers Improve Health Education

Academic Distinction Fund, Baton Rouge, LA

One challenge in creating and sustaining long-term change in health education is providing teachers with the support they need to integrate health topics into their daily lessons.

In Baton Rouge, LA, support proved most effective when it came from fellow teachers rather than health workers in the community. “Every profession speaks its own language,” says Jan Melton, executive director of the Academic Distinction Fund (ADF). Before teachers could embrace health-education planning efforts, they needed leadership from a colleague who spoke their language.

The ADF Model

ADF and its partner organization, Health Care Centers in Schools, worked with two rural schools, each with a new health center, to develop a model for integrating health education into the core curriculum as a strategy for creating healthy, productive students.

Two to three lead teachers at each school helped their colleagues brainstorm ideas for health education in a variety of curriculum areas, develop school teams, and

bring in community partners to provide resources and expertise. In the summer, lead teachers worked with their school teams on the following activities:

- Planning school health activities for the coming year
- Developing a schoolwide health theme for every month
- Integrating health education activities into math, science, reading, and other curriculum areas

Results

The lead teachers facilitated professional development by giving teachers a vehicle for aligning curricula in core subject areas and sharing lesson plans. Teachers became more receptive when they realized this process did not add new work, but rather provided support for planning they would otherwise have done alone. Teachers continued to use and adapt these activities and lessons well after the health-education planning efforts ended.

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Resources

Achieving Healthy Schools: A Guide for School-Based Teams in Planning Comprehensive School Health Programs

A guide for school teams working through a comprehensive school health planning process. The guide includes questionnaires to assess assets, needs and school health capacity, and models for bringing health services into schools.

Public Education Fund ▪ 410 454 1050 ▪ www.ri.net/PEF/orderform-achieving.htm

Learning Along the Way: Professional Development by and for Teachers

A case study of how an inner-city public school in Denver, CO, used learner-centered professional development to achieve outstanding gains in teacher knowledge and effectiveness. Includes examples of how to move from a one-size-fits-all professional development model to an authentic learning environment that meets the needs of individual teachers.

Public Education & Business Coalition ▪ 303 861 8661 ▪ www.pebc.org

School Walkthroughs for Principals

A professional development tool focused on instruction and peer coaching. Created by the Fund for Educational Excellence in Baltimore, MD, the tool offers information on how to organize a school visit along with a worksheet for principals to use during a walkthrough.

Public Education Network ▪ 202 628 7460 ▪ www.PublicEducation.org/ST-educators-reflective.asp

Library Power

A website full of information about the successful, multiyear program to transform libraries into media learning centers. Library Power also offers links to resources for improving library and media programs.

www.librarypower.org

Thinking Strategies for Learners

A platform for staff development, designed by a national leader in reading comprehension strategy instruction and staff development. More than 50 PEBC teachers and staff developers are helping K–12 teachers in Denver incorporate research-based instructional practices into their classrooms.

Public Education & Business Coalition ▪ 303 861 8661 ▪ www.pebc.org

COLLABORATING WITH DISTRICTS

Being a full partner means sharing the work, and sharing the responsibility, for school reform efforts.

Collaborative efforts between local education funds and school districts have the greatest potential for generating sustainable change. Being a full partner with a school district requires local education funds to commit to sharing the work of and responsibility for implementing broad school reform strategies. Such partnerships also require that the LEF and the school district act as constructive critics and supportive allies for one another.

A school-by-school approach to reform is not sustainable. Unless there are changes in district-level policies, reconfigurations in staffing, and public expressions of support, reform cannot take root as long-term change. Since district-level policy affects practice at the school level, LEFs must take advantage of leverage points that promote district-level change.

LEFs collaborate with districts as vendors, critical friends, and allies. Some work with districts to identify, plan for, and implement whole-school reform models that support change in teaching and learning. Others work with districts to develop high academic standards and build the necessary support from parents, community members, and educators to implement standards.

In collaborating with districts, the tension between being a vendor, a funder, and a critical friend can be difficult. LEFs must stay focused on the agreed-upon goals to maintain their credibility and sustain their relationship with the district.

LESSONS LEARNED

Start with an end goal in mind. Even if reform begins only in a few schools, define goals for district-level change from the outset. Design the work in individual schools to reflect changes you would like to see at the system level.

Stay in touch. Collaborative efforts are strengthened by open lines of communication, ongoing feedback from teachers and administrators, candid discussion of challenges, and shared credit for success.

Take a long-term view. Collaboration takes time; sustainable collaborative efforts require long-term commitments from LEFs, districts, and schools.

Celebrate success. Celebrations and recognition are important for those on the front lines. Celebrations can also generate visibility and cultivate support for the program across the school system and in the community.

Target risk-takers. Seek out school leaders who are willing to take risks to gain early acceptance of or interest in new ideas and innovations in practice.

Build collaboration through trust. Building trust takes time, so cultivate partnerships early in the process. Be true to your word; do not promise more than you can deliver.

Creating an Infrastructure for Collaboration

Fund for Educational Excellence, Baltimore, MD

Challenge

Achievement First, an initiative to align standards to district practice, was developed to improve student achievement in some of Baltimore's lowest-performing elementary schools. The effectiveness of the research-driven, standards-based reform model became evident when, after three years, test scores in those schools rose to match the city average. Implementation of the initiative then expanded to a larger group of elementary schools.

But the Fund for Educational Excellence saw the need to work to scale and ensure improvement in student achievement at all levels in all schools. Approaches that worked at the elementary level had to be reassessed for effectiveness at the middle and high school levels, and an expanded constituency, more resources, and new levers for effective reform had to be developed. In short, taking *Achievement First* to scale required a new kind of partnership with the school district.

Strategic Intervention

To meet that challenge, the Fund for Educational Excellence is working to take elements of *Achievement First* and develop a districtwide approach for creating and managing environments in which all teachers and students can succeed. Working in close collaboration, the Baltimore City Public School System (BCPSS) and the fund will use what has been learned in implementing the reform model in elementary schools to improve student achievement in schools throughout the district. *Achievement First* is based on five elements:

- Schools focus on literacy
- Principals develop as instructional leaders
- Standards shape instructional strategies
- On-site professional development in literacy improves instructional quality
- Family/community partnerships reinforce classroom literacy instruction

The fund and BCPSS are working together to implement *Achievement First* by training professional development coaches for all schools, rolling out the *Achievement First* model in all district middle schools, and mounting a major high school reform effort.

LEF Work

As the work broadens across the district and deepens in its complexity, it has become more critical than ever that the fund work closely with the central office and with schools. The following strategies are being used to create an infrastructure that can support and sustain this broad collaborative effort:

Multiple stakeholders. Initiatives are being designed through extensive collaborative planning that involves a broad range of stakeholders from the community, the school system, and the fund. For example, in planning the district's Innovation High School reform effort, the fund worked with BCPSS to create a public/private partnership involving national and local foundations, local business and community leaders, and union and school system representatives.

Quality practice. The staffing and services provided must be of the highest caliber so that the fund is seen as a valuable resource. One school principal commented, *"Achievement First* consultants are current on everything and know the resources. They are a think tank for us."

Consistent communication. Communicating across organizational boundaries to work with an outside partner can be challenging, especially in a large system. Both the school district and the fund created *Achievement First* liaison positions to serve as the project's points of contact. The school district coordinator "lays the groundwork for the way the work gets done," says Bernice Alston, director of *Achievement First* for the fund. The coordinator and the director participate in all training sessions for principals and school staff.

Capacity for effective teaching and management practices. Professional development and coaching are central to the fund's work with BCPSS schools. In 2001–2002, the fund trained 300 academic coaches in math and language arts. To ensure consistency in implementation, academic coaches and principals from *Achievement First* schools participated in training in two areas during the 2002–2003 school year: managing change in schools and understanding how assessment affects instruction.

Results

Test scores show that *Achievement First* has begun to yield student achievement results in Baltimore's elementary schools. Scores in schools using the *Achievement First* model for two years rose an average of nine points in 1999–2000; third-year *Achievement First* schools saw scores increase twice the city average in 2000–2001.

Achievement First is expanding into all Baltimore middle schools. This is a move away from the previous whole-school approach to education reform to a districtwide approach to education reform.

The involvement of the fund as an external partner in providing ongoing professional development also represents a major change in district practice.

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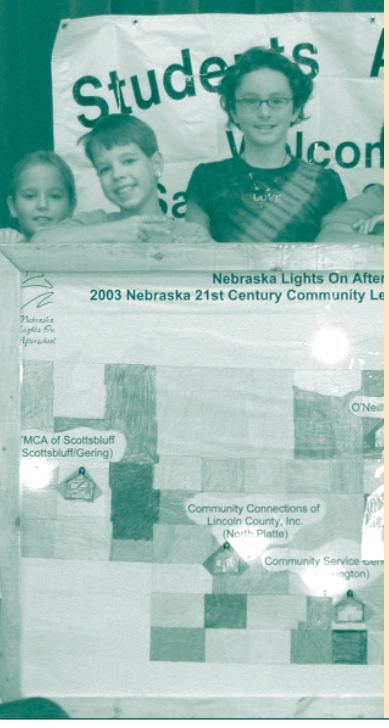

Connections for School-Linked Services

Foundation for Lincoln Public Schools, Lincoln, NE

Challenge

The Lincoln community is proud of its schools. A large percentage of young people attend public schools and the overall level of academic achievement is high. But Lincoln is also facing a rapid change in demographics: It has become home to many refugees from all over the world.

Faced with a high rate of resident mobility, an emerging achievement gap, and a growing low-income population in need of multiple supports, the Foundation for Lincoln Public Schools (FLPS) and its partners set out to create community learning centers (CLCs). Community leaders, school district staff, community representatives, and FLPS staff were challenged to develop a structure through which all children could receive appropriate supports and programs to ensure their success in and out of school.

Strategic Intervention

The Lincoln community launched Community Learning Centers (CLCs) as the way to provide additional student services. Foundation for Lincoln Public Schools developed a CLC planning process that engaged community leaders, school district staff, and an array of community-based organizations to ensure quality provision of services and to sustain the CLC administrative structure. FLPS entered into a partnership with the school district to create a governing council for the CLCs and a committee to oversee public engagement activities.

LEF Work

FLPS and the school district developed a collaborative relationship in the following four areas:

Community-wide leadership. Determining the CLC leadership structure presented a challenge: Would this be a school district initiative? An FLPS initiative? A separate nonprofit organization? FLPS brought in outside consultants to meet with local leaders, who then decided to develop an informal leadership council. The superintendent of Lincoln public schools is a member of the leadership council, as are the executive director of FLPS, representatives from city and county government, and the heads of community-based organizations involved in the initiative.

Operational roles and responsibilities. The CLCs also need to reflect shared leadership at the administrative level and community involvement in its operations. The superintendent decided to employ two co-coordinators, using 21st Century Community Learning Centers and Title I funding. One coordinator has extensive experience as a district board member, while the other worked in family and children's services. The two share responsibilities and interact with schools and community

organizations. The co-coordinators report directly to the superintendent, meet weekly with the superintendent's cabinet, and confer with the leadership council. To ensure alignment between the district curriculum and after-school programs, the co-coordinators work directly with the school district's director of curriculum.

School staff/CLC coordination. CLC supervisors are employed by the community-based organizations but are based at the schools. Each supervisor serves no more than two schools and works closely with school staff and community organizations to create a seamless relationship between the CLC and the school. This close relationship allows school and CLC staff to work together on uniform standards, collaborative planning, professional development, and specific interventions that keep children moving toward higher achievement.

Parent and community resident outreach. CLCs engage their community members through School Neighborhood Advisory Committees (SNACs). SNACs reach out to community members to develop support for CLC activities and to get input on other support that may be needed. Schools are reinforced as centers of community by providing gathering places for community members and sites for community activities.

Results

Lincoln CLCs have developed a structure that engages a rich array of community resources to support young people and their families. School staff members see CLCs as supporting student academic achievement, while community organizations see CLCs as places where they can connect with young people and their families.

In less than three years, CLCs have expanded into nearly one-third of all public schools in Lincoln. Learning activities in the CLCs are aligned with district standards, thus increasing opportunities for students to become successful learners. In surveys conducted by FLPS, teachers say they see improvement in their students' motivation to achieve, in the way students pay attention and follow directions in class, and in the level of students' self-confidence.

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Tools

Long-Term Collaborative Partnerships
Boston Plan for Excellence in the Public Schools

Since 1995, the Boston Plan for Excellence in the Public Schools (BPE) has been "encouraging, guiding, and pushing" the transformation of Boston's school system into a standards-centered system through a powerful partnership with the Boston public schools.

The pressure BPE has been generating has proven valuable to the school district's comprehensive reform plan. Referred to as a source of "healthy tension" by Superintendent Thomas Payzant, BPE is partnering with the district to implement the agreed-upon school reform framework. BPE's partnership with Boston public schools encompasses four elements:

Catalyze improvements. BPE investigates, researches, and synthesizes information on effective reform efforts in urban districts across the country. They work with the district to refine and test these elements in a district-endorsed model. BPE then makes recommendations for changes in practice to the superintendent. For example, BPE redesigned and piloted a model for intense literacy coaching, which has now become the model for professional development in all Boston schools. BPE staff has also worked with top-level school district staff since 1998 on the Resources Action Team to identify and address central obstacles to reform.

Provide technical support. Based on the significant amount of time they spend in schools, BPE staff members are able to bring to the district information and recommendations about what works and what needs improvement. BPE worked with the district to develop a tool so that schools can better manage and analyze assessment data; this has evolved into MyBPS, the school district's intranet. With MyBPS, every teacher can access student performance data and use the data to plan and individualize instruction.

Co-produce publications and videos. BPE and the Boston public schools have co-produced publications and videos to spotlight best practices in instruction and coaching, to share reform progress, and to help parents and communities understand their roles in supporting student learning.

Lead fundraising efforts. BPE serves as a fundraiser for school district reform efforts, and as a fiscal agent for outside sources of funding. BPE's fundraising efforts are aligned with agreed-upon reform efforts thanks to close communication between the foundation and the school district. Since 1996, BPE has raised more than $65 million to support district reform work in literacy and math.

Read more about the successful partnership between the Boston Plan for Excellence and Boston public schools in BPE's Triennial Report, available at www.bpe.org.

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Critical Friends Promote Collaboration

Houston A+ Challenge, Houston, TX

Houston A+ Challenge has identified class size, isolation, and teacher quality as three critical factors affecting student achievement. These factors drive the local education fund's collaboration with six Houston area school districts, ranging in size from 11,000 to 200,000 students.

Houston A+ uses the Critical Friends protocol—a method of collaborative inquiry, developed by the Annenberg Institute for School Reform, that provides teachers and administrators with time and structure—to promote professional growth that supports student learning. By creating a structure in which participants study and learn together, Critical Friends promotes shifts in school culture that encourage teachers, principals, and superintendents to share lessons learned and effective strategies for common challenges. These new relationships also promote greater involvement in schools by parents and members of the community.

As one of 25 Critical Friends centers in the country, Houston A+ trains and places 100–150 Critical Friends coaches and mentors in individual schools every year. Houston A+ has formed several networks that use Critical Friends methods to facilitate collaboration among professionals that have similar roles in Houston area public schools. These networks include district leaders, school leaders, high school principals, school improvement facilitators, literacy teachers, and university deans.

Design and Structure

In a typical Critical Friends group, a coach guides the group members as they develop collaboration skills, reflect on their practices, and evaluate student work. The following are components of the Critical Friend protocol:

- Eight to 12 teachers and administrators, working together regularly with a coach for two years to define and improve student achievement
- Trained coaches helping group members build a sense of trust, sharpen insight, promote creativity, and encourage candid peer feedback
- A two-hour meeting every month, preferably held during the school day
- Monthly classroom observation and peer feedback

Critical Friends support each other in the following ways:

- Establish and publicize student learning goals
- Help each other develop better teaching practices
- Assess curriculum and student work
- Identify aspects of school culture that affect student achievement

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Overcoming Turf Issues

Turf issues can surface when people with different training and experience come together in a collaborative effort. Add to this the inherent power shift that occurs in a school/community partnership—away from a school board/principal power base toward a shared partnership with community agencies and parents—and there is potential for bruised egos and crossed signals.

Work styles. Different professions have different standards and styles of working. The differences may cause turbulence. Even simple things, such as a preference for communicating verbally rather than in writing, can get in the way of collaboration unless conscious efforts are made to put the partnership first.

Language barriers. Even when everyone speaks English, there can be language barriers given the mix of laypeople and professionals. Terms that have clear meaning to some may come across as empty expressions to others. For effective communication to take place, the team will have to develop a common language.

Priorities. People in school/community collaborations bring differing areas of expertise to the team. They also have distinct priorities, rooted in their philosophies, training, and personal histories. If these priorities conflict, a sense of competition can easily develop among team members. The benefits of the partnership have to be greater than the fear of identity loss or shifts in agendas. A consensus on common priorities, in the form of a vision statement, can help clarify outcomes that every partner can support.

Partner vs. vendor. It will be difficult to establish a collaborative partnership if social workers, or other professionals external to the school, are viewed as vendors rather than integral members of the school team. From the outset, everyone involved in the partnership must be clear on the design of the program and its integration with school goals.

Credentials. Credentials, advanced degrees, training, understanding of community issues, and personal concern for children are valuable to the partnership. Recognizing and respecting the strength of each partner's personal experience, and the collective experience of the team, make for a strong partnership.

Lessons adapted from The Children's Aid Society, Building a Community School, *2001.*
www.childrensaidsociety.org/locations_services/servicesindex/educationandcommunity/techassistance

Resources

PD with Purpose: Coaching in Boston's Schools

A video introduction to Collaborative Coaching & Learning (CCL), a new approach to in-school staff development that all schools in Boston have adopted. The video follows one literacy coach as she uses the CCL model with elementary, middle, and high school staff.

Boston Plan for Excellence in the Public Schools ▪ 617 227 8055 ▪ www.bpe.org

School Communities that Work

A committee of the Annenberg Institute's National Task Force on the Future of Urban Districts that promotes the "smart district" concept: a high-performing community of schools that ensures equity of opportunity and high-level achievement across all groups of students. *School Communities that Work for Results and Equity: A Portfolio for District Redesign* offers innovative recommendations for improving urban education systems.

School Communities that Work ▪ 212 375 9624 ▪ www.schoolcommunities.org
Annenberg Institute for School Reform ▪ 401 863 2018 ▪
www.annenberginstitute.org/publications/sctw_portfolio.html

Standards in Practice

A model for aligning high standards with curriculum, instruction, and assessment. The Standards in Practice training program helps teachers and parents reach a joint understanding of academic standards. Teachers use standards to assess and grade students' work; parents review school work in the context of standards.

The Education Trust ▪ www.edtrust.org ▪ 202 293 1217

POLICY ANALYSIS & AGENDA DEVELOPMENT

The challenge is to identify which policies and programs are effective and then create agendas to sustain them.

Local education funds are finding that success in district reform will be limited unless there are policies that support or create change in practice. A review of existing policies, and the factors that hinder or promote their effectiveness, is the first step in developing a policy agenda. Using this review, LEFs can determine whether new policies are needed or if existing policies need to be enforced more effectively.

It is critical that educators and the public understand these policies and their tangible effects on student achievement. To develop broad support for a change agenda, local education funds conduct research, develop easy-to-understand data presentations, and articulate clear arguments for policy agendas to policymakers, school districts, community stakeholders, and the public.

LESSONS LEARNED

Connect policies to outcomes. Evidence of ways in which specific policies influence teaching and learning helps people see the effects of policy decisions. Such evidence is often a powerful impetus for change.

Collect many kinds of data and track issues over time. Broaden the definition of what constitutes data to include interviews with teachers and school and district staff. Look for trends in data: common themes that appear frequently over time can signal a significant problem or issue.

Develop strategic partnerships. Link up with community groups that have the skills to analyze data and scrutinize policy. Look to local universities; often they are interested in school and district data and being part of policy analysis. Look for partners who understand the urgency of the issues.

Be a neutral analyst. Demonstrate that your data or policy analysis project has no hidden agenda; tap into a community representative who can help produce independent and credible information.

Using Research to Develop a Policy Agenda

Philadelphia Education Fund, Philadelphia, PA

Challenge

The problems of urban education are vast, as is the number of reform efforts trying to solve these problems. The challenge for school districts, and for intermediary organizations working with districts, is to identify which policies and programs are effective, and then create policy agendas that will sustain what works and change what does not.

Philadelphia Education Fund (PEF) was faced with district policies that were hindering local efforts to improve teacher quality. Residential requirements, inequitable distribution of quality teachers, and confusing retention policies were just some of the issues that had to be addressed. To tackle these issues, PEF used research and data to strengthen programs and advocate for more effective policies that would improve teacher quality in the district.

Strategic Intervention

Philadelphia Education Fund uses research as its primary strategic intervention for creating and sustaining reform in the Philadelphia school district. The fund uses research to evaluate teaching practice, develop and influence policy agendas, and promote these agendas to the public through reporting and advocacy.

LEF Work

PEF has strong research capacity on its staff, and has formed partnerships with local universities and independent research groups to conduct ongoing research to support policy change in three areas: teacher recruitment and retention, teacher assignment, and whole-school reform.

Teacher recruitment and retention. Pennsylvania required teachers working in Philadelphia public schools to live in the city. It became clear to PEF researchers that this residency requirement made teachers less willing to accept teaching positions or continue teaching in Philadelphia schools. PEF used their research findings in memos, public reports, media outreach, and personal contact with state legislators to successfully advocate for repeal of the requirement.

Teacher assignment. How teachers are assigned to the schools in which they teach influences the overall quality of teaching, especially in disadvantaged schools. PEF was able to document that schools in high-poverty areas have a greater number of less-qualified teachers than schools in wealthier areas. This finding—together with the requirement by *No Child Left Behind* to have a highly qualified teacher in every classroom by 2005, and the support of the Philadelphia school superintendent on this issue—spurred PEF to develop a policy agenda to address the problem: End the current policy of centralized assignment and instead let schools select their own teachers.

This change in policy is "critical to dealing with inequities," explains Elizabeth Useem, director of research and evaluation for PEF. "Poor schools will continue to get the least-qualified teachers until we get away from a highly centralized hiring process." PEF, in partnership with civic leaders and the school district, is working to persuade schools to vote for school-based selection and to institutionalize it in the next collective bargaining agreement with the teachers union.

Whole-school reform. The Philadelphia school district began using a talent development model for whole-school reform in 1995. Since that time, PEF has been gathering and analyzing data on student achievement, school climate, and teacher retention issues in participating schools. Using its own research, and that of an external evaluator, PEF has been able to show that, over time, the model improves attendance, raises achievement levels, increases graduation rates, and contributes to declines in suspensions, firings, and arrests.

PEF has publicized this data, including student feedback, through district and community communication channels and has presented the data during meetings with the superintendent.

Results

Thanks to PEF's research-based policy analysis and agenda development, ineffective policies are being discarded and effective practices are being used more widely.

The campaign to get more schools and the teachers union to sanction site-based teacher selection continues. PEF, however, already secured a key victory with the repeal of the teacher residency requirement by the Pennsylvania General Assembly in June 2001. As a result of the repeal, and of other efforts to fill city classrooms with more qualified teachers, retention is greater and there are significantly fewer vacancies.

The talent development model has been implemented in seven middle schools and seven high schools. During the 2002–2003 school year, two of the middle schools served as district demonstration sites for good teaching and management practices. "Without the results, it never would have spread," says Useem. "The research was essential to getting talent development into more schools."

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Evaluating the Impact of Student Assignment Policies

Wake Education Partnership, Raleigh, NC

Challenge

Raleigh, NC, a community with longtime racial divisions, has struggled for decades to manage desegregation in its public schools. Recently, a highly successful magnet school program—along with a student assignment policy that limits the percentage of poor children in any one school—was used to achieve racial and economic diversity in schools and, at the same time, fully utilize available school space.

But the assignment policy came under attack when the community experienced a spurt in population growth. Many new residents did not understand the history and rationale behind this policy, and some petitioned the school board to adopt a policy of neighborhood schools. In light of this resistance, Wake Education Partnership had to build public understanding of and support for diversity in the Wake public schools, and for policies that support diversity.

Strategic Intervention

Wake Education Partnership advocated for diversity policies by issuing a formal statement of support, by organizing a community discussion on the trade-offs between diversity and school assignment policies, and by offering research-based recommendations to the district and the community on how to maintain diversity through student assignment policies.

LEF Work

The partnership began by educating its board of trustees—comprising largely influential community business leaders—in how school diversity affects workforce readiness, crime rates, and student achievement. The board then took the unprecedented step of issuing a resolution asking the community to remain committed to diversity in the Wake County public schools.

Tony Habit, former president of the partnership, describes the student assignment issue as an indirect way of addressing issues of race and class. To engage in honest discussion of these sensitive issues, calmly and thoroughly, the community required knowledge about the facts and opportunities.

Community engagement is not always comfortable, Habit notes, but it is vital to the health of the community and to the way Wake Education Partnership works to define and advocate for policy agendas. “Everything Wake does is about building leadership and relationships in the community,” says Habit.

The partnership helped the community explore the implications of policy decisions through public television programs and public dialogue. The television series, aired on the local cable access channel, involved panel discussions on the economic, academic, and political issues linked to school diversity and student assignment. The partnership also hosted a panel discussion on the consequences of free-market student assignment policies, followed by community discussion on key considerations for addressing the issue.

Wake Education Partnership released a report, *Making Choices: Diversity, Student Assignment and Quality in Wake's Public Schools,* in spring 2002. The report included information on policies and practices related to student assignment and summarized possible outcomes of alternative models. The partnership contends that a dramatic shift in the current policy—toward greater choice in school attendance—would lead to a greater concentration of poverty in some schools and would be detrimental to the ability of those schools to recruit and retain quality teachers and provide students with opportunities to achieve at high levels.

In its role as an intermediary, the partnership continues to listen to community voices, especially to the voices of those who feel their concerns have not been heard, and then takes this public input to school district officials and helps them process it. "Our challenge as an organization is to work in the breech between the school system and the community, and try to cultivate leadership that is capable of problem solving and capable of buffering very difficult trade-offs," says Habit.

Results

Diversity and balance in student enrollment are destined to become leading issues in future school board elections.

Wake Education Partnership worked with the Wake County superintendent to form a Healthy Schools Task Force to guide the community in reaching consensus on how to address the issue of diversity in schools.

Habit cites lessons learned through successful engagement on this highly charged issue: "Minimize the conflict, elevate the leadership, engage in problem solving," and community residents will rise to the challenge.

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Tools

An Agenda for Student Success

Lancaster Foundation for Educational Enrichment, Lancaster, PA

The Lancaster Foundation for Educational Enrichment (LFEE), working with the Network for Safe and Healthy Children, used the PEN Community Assessment Framework to educate a diverse group of community stakeholders and bring focus to conversations on what it takes for students to be successful in and out of school.

Educating stakeholders on the five key elements of student success was an essential first step in reaching agreement that meeting the needs of children, youth, and families is the shared responsibility of the broader community.

PEN's Five-Point Community Assessment Framework

- Quality Education
- Family Supports
- Child and Youth Development
- Family and Community Engagement
- Community Development

More than 25 meetings were held to present the framework to community groups, health and human service providers, decision makers—to include the mayor, school district staff, and students, and to get input from this diverse group of stakeholders. The meetings were used to present the following information:

Jasmine's story: What gets in the way of learning

Participants were asked to put themselves in the role of a school-age child named Jasmine. Audience members had to pinch their cheeks to simulate a toothache and repeatedly count backward from 50 as they listened to the story of Jasmine, an 8-year-old girl with a chaotic home life, who comes to school without much sleep, no breakfast, and a painful toothache. The exercise shows how many factors beyond teacher/student interactions can get in the way of learning.

The five-point framework: What students need to be successful

The framework presented elements, and helped reinforce concepts, that Jasmine and other students need to be successful. "The need for quality education in the school setting and family supports are the two things that always come to mind when we think about what students need," says Laura Olin, executive director of the foundation. "But the framework helped people see a larger role for the community, and for what had to be provided for strong families and successful youth."

Community schools: What they are
To show tangible examples of the framework in action, the foundation showed a short video produced by the Children's Aid Society that profiles a community school in New York City.

Data gathering: What the community needs most
The presentations on the five-point framework and on community schools generated input from participants on the most pressing needs of children and youth in the community, how the needs could best be addressed, and information about existing services that could serve those needs. "As the community-wide strategic planning process unfolded, this data played a very important role in determining the design of services," states Olin.

Results
Two years into the process, broader responsibility for addressing mental and behavioral health issues—the most pressing need identified in the community-data-gathering process—has come to fruition. The resulting family and youth resource centers are a collaborative venture of LFEE, the Network for Safe and Healthy Children, and the Lancaster school district.

As a first step in developing the centers, two new staff positions for student and family advocates were created in the fall of 2003. The advocates will have use of dedicated space in three schools and will serve as liaisons between the schools, their students, and community mental health providers. Two community mental and behavioral health organizations also offer on-site services at those schools, while several other organizations have committed to provide services at other schools.

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Resources

A Community Action Guide to Teacher Quality

A guide, based on the experiences of eight local education funds, to help communities improve the quality of teaching in their public schools. Included are step-by-step procedures for using data to assess teacher quality, for creating school and community environments that support teacher quality, and for engaging the community in support of teacher quality.

Public Education Network ▪ 202 628 7460 ▪ www.PublicEducation.org/tqguide.asp

Opportunities-to-Learn Framework

A framework of resources and supports—based on opportunity-to-learn standards and on preconditions for quality education—that children need to succeed academically:

- Every child enters school ready to learn.
- Every child has access to a rich curriculum aligned to standards.
- Every child has high-quality instruction.
- Every child is in a school environment conducive to learning.
- Every child has access to community services that support and enhance learning.

Public Education Network ▪ 202 628 7460 ▪ www.PublicEducation.org/SA-opportunitiestolearn.asp

Community Assessment Framework

Help in designing community schools able to provide integrated, seamless services to children and families. The framework offers guidelines for assessing existing partnerships and services, gaps in programs and services, and barriers to service provision by organizing data into five core areas:

1. Quality Education
2. Family Supports
3. Child and Youth Development
4. Family and Community Engagement
5. Community Development

Public Education Network ▪ 202 628 7460 ▪ www.PublicEducation.org/sc-commassessment.asp

Reports on Teacher Quality in Philadelphia

Research on teacher quality—specifically retention, distribution, and staffing—made easy to understand by effective use of charts, graphs, and descriptive text.

Philadelphia Education Fund ▪ 215 665 1400 ▪ www.philaedfund.org

Policy Analysis & Agenda Development **References**

All for All: Teacher Excellence for Every Child

Factors that affect teacher professionalism and effectiveness assessed by representatives from business, university, and education. *All for All* presents task force findings and gives recommendations for addressing teacher qualifications.

Wake Education Partnership ▪ 919 821 7609 ▪ www.wakeeducates.org/teacher

Common Sense

A guide to Nashville's school budget that outlines where the money comes from, who works in the schools, why the funding issue is urgent, and what citizens can do.

Nashville Public Education Foundation ▪ 615 354 9485 ▪ www.nashvillepef.org/grants/common%20cents.pdf

LEGAL STRATEGIES

Courts can be powerful allies in the fight to provide all children a sound basic education.

Legal strategies are an effective way to fight for resources and regulations necessary to provide quality education to all students. Most school litigation is based on state constitutional or statutory requirements of a free public education at the elementary and secondary levels. The predominant legal theories have evolved from "equity"—seeking to ensure that all students have equal or fair allocation of resources—to "adequacy"—seeking to ensure that all students have access to the resources necessary to achieve. This evolution takes into account recently promulgated state standards that specify knowledge and skills required of students for promotion or graduation. It also recognizes that students are not on equal footing and that some may need greater support, and therefore more resources, to meet required standards.

LEFs can play several important roles in litigation by gathering and using data, giving expert testimony, bringing public opinion to bear in efforts to shape legal strategies and remedies, and forming coalitions to file amicus briefs.

The legal strategies highlighted in this guide are examples of proactive advocacy on the part of local education funds. Although LEFs may not be directly involved in the litigation, lawyers arguing the cases can benefit from the information and support that LEFs and other community entities provide.

LESSONS LEARNED

Be proactive. Engage the community in helping to define solutions to the problems raised by school reform litigation.

Get into the game early. Become familiar with the issues. Being involved from the ground up gives local education funds the opportunity to help shape the legal case and the court's directives about how a new finance system would be implemented.

Bring expertise to the table. Use your community-based perspective and knowledge of educational best practice to help make the case for educational equity.

Do your homework. Forty-five states have had at least one school finance case. Find out what has been done in your state, what has failed, and what can be learned from successful efforts across the country.

Quality Education in Low-Income School Districts

Paterson Education Fund, Paterson, NJ

Challenge

Implementing the provisions of *Abbott v. Burke,* the 1990 landmark New Jersey case on funding parity, is a massive and complex undertaking. The process encompasses extensive reform mandates laid out in a series of 10 decisions over 20 years by the New Jersey Supreme Court, and in resultant policies from the state legislature and regulations from the New Jersey department of education.

Because *Abbott* is so broad and so revolutionary, the challenge for state and community advocates is to make sure that state-level policies and rules are in keeping with the intent of the Court's decisions, and that they support full and fair implementation of *Abbott* in local communities.

"Unless local school districts and the state education department are held accountable for how they implement *Abbott,* the legal remedies will be hollow," says Steven Block, director of school reform initiatives for the Education Law Center, a legal advocacy organization that represents *Abbott* plaintiffs.

Strategic Intervention

Paterson Education Fund (PEF) and other New Jersey local education funds are helping their communities determine what practical actions can be used to implement *Abbott* and advocate for state-level policy and rules responsive to local needs.

LEF Work

Because the court rulings are complicated—and because the demographics, geography, and local politics vary enormously across the 30 *Abbott* districts—implementation of *Abbott* is an iterative process. As the process evolves, communities must monitor how state policies operationalizing the *Abbott* decisions are playing out in their locales.

Once there is sufficient data on local implementation, local education funds will be in a position to advocate for community needs by approaching decision makers with information on what is working and what is not, and disseminating the data through reports, editorials, and media outreach.

"We have to gather data and anecdotes about the successes and consequences at the local level and feed that back up into the decision-making pipeline before the policies will be responsive to our local needs," says Irene Sterling, PEF's executive director. PEF has presented local data and identified local needs in various ways:

- By analyzing spending on supplemental programs in the Paterson school district, PEF was able to demonstrate the value of such funding to Paterson and the consequences if it were cut off. This local data was used to prepare arguments in *Abbott X,* the tenth *Abbott* case, in which the Court reaffirmed its mandate for supplemental funding.

- PEF testified before the state legislature, using results from local and statewide forums to assert that community members can and should have input in the state rule-making process, especially on issues relating to new and renovated school facilities.
- PEF staff and board members, who participated in working groups that are part of the governor's *Abbott* Task Force, brought a strong local perspective to the discussion of regulatory issues and to questions relating to implementation.
- PEF facilitated the first-ever meeting between the Paterson school board, the city council, and the mayor to talk about *Abbott* and other reforms, thus creating greater understanding of how to leverage and coordinate efforts for the benefit of the community. Municipal leaders who attended the meeting became advocates for responsive state policies.

PEF is working with *Abbott* communities to form new local education funds and provide support for existing LEFs. "Coalitions are essential for successful advocacy at the state level—and for greater impact on change efforts at the local level," says Sterling.

Result

Abbott implementation is still a work in progress, with negotiations to develop and revise policies and regulations underway. Paterson Education Fund has helped the community develop a greater level of understanding about the consequences poor school districts will face—wider achievement gaps, more school closures, and fewer support services—if *Abbott* is not implemented.

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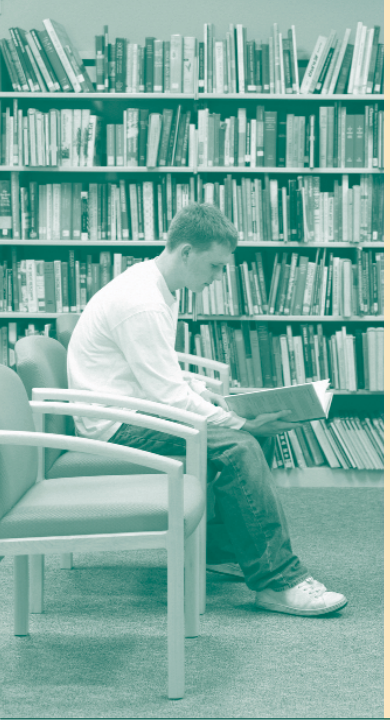

Shaping Legal Strategies and Remedies

Good Schools for All, Buffalo, NY
New Visions for Public Schools, New York, NY

Challenge

In a lawsuit filed on behalf of New York City schoolchildren in the early 1990s, the Campaign for Fiscal Equity (CFE), a coalition of advocacy groups, parent organizations, and community school boards, charged that the state's school funding system was underfunding New York City public schools, thus denying students their constitutional right to an education. In summer 2003, after 10 years of litigation, the New York Court of Appeals ruled that the state funding system must be revamped to provide students with an opportunity for a sound basic education.

During litigation of *CFE v. State of New York,* and after the landmark ruling, the challenge for community organizations has been to harness the power and voice of the public to clarify a vision for what constitutes a "sound basic education" and to harness public accountability for ensuring that students receive the quality education the court has mandated.

Strategic Intervention

Partnering with CFE, Good Schools for All (GSFA) and New Visions for Public Schools provided information about what constitutes a sound basic education and what local communities need to ensure that their students receive a sound basic education.

LEF Work

The work the local education funds did to help shape legal strategies, observes Samira Ahmed, deputy director of CFE, made the strategies more comprehensive, inclusive, and accountable to community needs.

GSFA got the youth of Buffalo engaged in the litigation issues. In a mock trial to educate 250 high school students about the lawsuit, a professional theater company dramatized the trial transcripts and presented evidence, while students served as jurors. After hearing testimony and questioning the actors on the case, the students deliberated and rendered a verdict that affirmed their right to a sound basic education.

GSFA will also work with CFE and other community organizations to ensure that remedies in *CFE v. State of New York* are implemented across the state. "There will be a serious temptation to give money to New York City and call it good," says Cara Stillman, former GSFA executive director. "Those of us outside the city have to make sure that equity extends across the entire state."

Both GSFA and New Visions are collaborating with CFE on a yearlong study, led by CFE and the New York State School Boards Association, to determine the cost of providing a sound basic education to students in New York state. GSFA and

New Visions are part of the 32-member Council on Costing Out that is advising an independent panel of experts charged with determining costs. The study utilized public forums in communities across the state, including Buffalo. These forums helped identify eight points of consensus on what children need to succeed.

These points of consensus, says Ahmed, puts pressure on the panel to be accountable to the public. "Public input can have a direct impact on the costing out process, because it creates a system of checks and balances." If the panel excludes one or more of the eight consensus areas from its recommendations, it has to provide the public with reasons why, explains Ahmed.

New Visions, through their ties to key players in the equity case, will help shape legal remedies. In addition, their work in creating 35 small schools in New York City, and now its $30 million New Century High Schools project, puts them in position to contribute to the costing-out debate. "Legal remedies can function as a two-by-four in moving systems forward, but sometimes you need a surgical scalpel….The Court must look at what New Visions and other CBOs have been doing in schools," says Bob Hughes, New Vision's president.

Ahmed affirms the importance of New Visions' intermediary role: "New Visions is linked to schools in a much more hands-on way than CFE….They can bring unique perspectives on teacher, school, and student needs."

Results

In a unique opportunity to shape New York's future, local education funds brought forward community voices, including those of students, to influence the legal strategies employed in *CFE v. State of New York.* LEFs and other community organizations are positioned to help implement the legal remedies and hold state and school officials accountable for being responsive to community needs.

New York state residents are taking action on the issue of fiscal equity: Pressure from constituents caused state legislators to override the governor's veto of the 2003–2004 budget—a historic move that restored $2 billion dollars to early childhood education, class-size reduction, and other essentials for quality education.

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Summary of the Decision by the Court of Appeals in *Campaign for Fiscal Equity, Inc. v. State of New York*

The Campaign for Fiscal Equity, Inc. (CFE), a coalition of advocacy groups, parent organizations, and community school boards, filed *CFE v. State of New York,* a lawsuit charging that the state unconstitutionally underfunded New York City's schools. Ten years later, in a landmark decision on June 26, 2003, the New York Court of Appeals ruled 4–1 that the state funding system must be reformed to ensure that every school in New York City has sufficient resources to provide its students with the opportunity for a meaningful high school education. The court ordered a three-part remedy:

1. The state must ascertain the "actual cost of providing a sound basic education in New York City."
2. The state must reform the funding system to ensure that "every school in New York City would have the resources necessary for providing the opportunity for a sound basic education" (which is defined as "a meaningful high school education, one which prepares [students] to function productively as civic participants").
3. The state must put in place a system of accountability that will ensure that the reforms actually provide this opportunity.

While the state has until July 30, 2004, to implement the necessary measures, CFE and other organizations are advocating that these reforms apply to all students in the state of New York.

Adapted from CFE materials (www.cfequity.org)

Tool

Accountable Schools, Accountable Public

Accountable Schools, Accountable Public is a model for public discourse on how to set standards for school systems and establish a comprehensive accountability system. Sponsored by the League of Women Voters of New York State and the Campaign for Fiscal Equity, the model was designed to enlist the help of New Yorkers in establishing a court-ordered accountability system to guarantee a "sound basic education" for all students.

Although the model was developed for use in conjunction with the New York litigation, it applies to other states and localities seeking to develop an agreed-upon framework for a school accountability system. The model is based on a series of facilitated round-table discussions of 8–12 people who explore possibilities for school accountability systems and discuss what might work in their schools or districts. The series comprises three sessions: (1) Setting Standards for Our School System, (2) Understanding School Accountability Today, and (3) Creating Comprehensive Accountability.

Session 1: Setting Standards for Our School System

This session gives participants an opportunity to consider goals and objectives for the public school system. Participants review six goals for a school system and then respond to the following questions:

- Describe your background; what was school like for you?
- Which of these goals do you think is the most important for the public school system today? Why?
- How did your experiences with the public schools shape what you think about these goals?
- Were schools then effective at meeting their goals? How?
- Has the need for accountability in the schools changed since then?
- Does the public school system in your community do a good job of achieving the most important goals? If so, how? If not, why not?
- What experiences and beliefs have helped form your ideas?

Session 2: Understanding School Accountability Today

The second session explores the strengths and weaknesses of the current system of school accountability. Participants learn about the New York state accountability system, review three other approaches to school accountability, and then respond to the following questions:

- Are schools now effectively held accountable for fulfilling their responsibility to provide students a meaningful education?
- Of the views above, is there one that best fits your ideas, and why?
- Are there other ideas you would like to add?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of each view when considered from the perspective of the students, the parents, and the schools?
- What experiences and beliefs have helped you form your ideas?
- As you listen to others describe what has shaped their views, what new insights and ideas do you gain? What are the common concerns and ideas in your group?
- Examine these views in light of your tax bill. What kinds of changes are you willing to pay for? What else are you willing to do to help make improvements in the public school system?

Session 3: Creating Comprehensive Accountability

The last session explores the roles and responsibilities of various groups of stakeholders—state and local governments, school districts, administrators, teachers, parents, students and community members—in accountability systems. Participants learn about ways to tackle school accountability and then respond to the following questions:

- What added resources are needed in your school or district?
- What climate for teaching and learning is needed to ensure the opportunity for a sound basic education?
- What else do you think is needed to ensure a sound basic education?
- If your school or district were guaranteed all the resources needed for a sound basic education for all students, could your school community guarantee a climate for successful teaching and learning that would result in high achievement for all students? If so, how? If not, why not?
- In what ways could you be held responsible for improved student learning?
- What could you hold other stakeholder groups accountable for?
- What mechanisms would you create to ensure student learning?
- What obstacles hinder comprehensive accountability?

- Are there legal obstacles (rules or regulations that get in the way)?
- Can vouchers play a useful role in ensuring school accountability?
- Can charter schools play a useful role in ensuring school accountability?

Result

Community roundtable participants have discovered common ground and have developed a greater desire and ability to work collaboratively—as individuals, as members of small groups, and as members of large community organizations—to solve local problems.

League of Women Voters of New York State ▪ 518 465 4162 ▪ www.lwvny.org

Resources

Paterson Education Fund

A good example of a website used as an advocacy tool for legal strategies and as a tool to help the public hold a school district or state accountable for implementing those strategies.

Paterson Education Fund ▪ 973 881 8914 ▪ www.paterson-education.org

Education Law Center

A website with information on *Abbott* decisions and explanations of the programs and services mandated by those decisions.

Education Law Center ▪ 973 624 1815 ▪ www.edlawcenter.org

Campaign for Fiscal Equity

A website with resources on the *CFE v. State of New York* school finance litigation, public engagement efforts to gather input on issues related to the litigation, and the costing-out study to determine the amount of money needed to provide every child a sound basic education.

Campaign for Fiscal Equity ▪ 212 867 8455 ▪ www.cfequity.org

Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF)

Leadership programs from this nonprofit Latino litigation, advocacy, and educational outreach institution that provide parents with the knowledge and tools to advocate for a quality education for their children.

Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund ▪ 213 629 2512 ▪ www.maldef.org

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

The talent and leadership that young people bring to the table enhance learning and education reform.

Educational policies and programs have a direct impact on the quality of education young people receive, and on their opportunity to develop the skills they need to become productive members of their communities.

Young people should be engaged in improving educational policies and programs, shaping community attitudes and views about the purpose and nature of education, and developing and implementing strategies for school and community learning opportunities. Meaningful youth engagement recognizes the strengths young people bring to the learning process and supports the deliberate practice of those strengths. Young people need opportunities to take what they learn in school and apply that knowledge to contributions they can make at home and in the community.

While youth engagement is strong enough to stand alone as a strategic intervention, it is also a lens through which the other interventions can be examined. Young people can be stakeholders in community dialogue and constituency building efforts. They can be valuable partners in analyzing policy and working with practitioners. Efforts to engage young people must take place at multiple levels and across multiple strategies.

LESSONS LEARNED

Link with other groups. Nonprofits working with youth can help launch or enhance a project and support training and implementation of youth engagement initiatives. Many of these organizations have tools and strategies for engaging young people.

Place youth at many different levels and in many different roles. Young people can help design their own learning; in doing so, they can foster an improved school environment, and contribute to community service and system-level change. Be thoughtful in shaping roles for youth and in selecting a diverse group of young people for those roles.

Secure resources. Young people need resources to be productive and to engage their peers in their efforts. They may need money for training, events, and materials or perhaps space for meetings, permission to conduct a survey, or access to individuals.

Train adults to partner with youth. Effective partnering comprises a set of skills that must be learned. While some adults naturally understand how to partner with youth, the skills piece of partnering often gets short shrift. Youth engagement is conceptually simple but difficult to pull off unless adults have proper training.

Train young people to be effective. Young people have intuitive, experiential sensibilities and perspectives. These qualities can contribute to the development of programs, action agendas, and policy recommendations, but an investment in skill development is also required. Skills and motivation are critical factors in young people's success.

Focus on daily experiences. Advocates might be concerned about funding formulas, but if young people want to talk about the condition of their school bathrooms, start by tackling that issue and then build connections to broader concerns.

Engaging Youth to Support Peers

San Francisco Education Fund, San Francisco, CA

Challenge

Creating a safe and supportive learning environment for all students is one of the biggest challenges school administrators face, particularly in large comprehensive high schools. Young people and adults alike intuitively recognize that school climate is a key factor in overall school success, having a positive effect on classroom management and achievement and contributing to declines in dropout rates and conflicts.

Many districts are finding that one of the most effective ways to maintain a positive school climate is to get young people engaged in peer-based activities and initiatives designed to create positive climate change. However, engaging students in meaningful roles, with an appropriate balance of adult support, is easier said than done. It requires staffing and structural support, training for young people and adults, and a school district commitment to respect the ideas and decisions of young people.

Strategic Intervention

In 1980, the San Francisco Education Fund (SFEF) created the Peer Resources program in partnership with the San Francisco Unified School District. Peer Resources is one of the most comprehensive peer programs in California and is considered to be a national model. Currently underway in 12 high schools and 7 middle schools, Peer Resources operates programs in conflict mediation, peer education, tutoring, mentoring, and support groups, and trains more than 1,000 students every year to provide resources and services to an additional 15,000 students.

LEF Work

A key challenge for SFEF is to educate administrators and teachers in how to engage young people in improving educational supports for large systems, not just individual schools. Individual schools approach the LEF to design peer-based programs that address the school's climate needs. Students become peer mediators after completing an intensive training program in mediation, conflict resolution, and peer consultations. School staff members also undergo training and provide on-site support as students mediate conflicts for their peers. During the 2002–2003 school year, 373 youth-led mediations were conducted in participating schools.

Another Peer Resources program—Strategies of Successful Students—guides academically successful students in helping other students improve their grades, learn specific academic material, and enhance their study strategies and skills. Each school designs the program to address its specific needs. Schools set aside money from district funding formulas to support the costs of a full- or part-time teacher/coordinator for their Peer Resources programs. SFEF raises an additional $350,000 a year to support program activities and administrative requirements, and to enhance school capacity to implement quality programs.

SFEF has a strong commitment to youth leadership. In addition to school-based work, student leaders serve as coordinators for various initiatives, plan and execute projects, run meetings, and make presentations to a range of audiences about Peer Resources initiatives.

Results

Peer Resources measures success in three areas: the experiences of peer facilitators, the improvements in school environment, and the experiences of youth who receive peer services. The program has had some anticipated results and some surprising ones.

Gains in peer facilitation skills and in school environments have already occurred. In a survey of peer facilitators, 80 percent report improvements in their decision-making and problem-solving skills, and 85 percent say Peer Resources helped them learn to resolve conflicts peacefully. The majority of peer facilitators believe in their efficacy: when asked if they "believe that their actions make a difference," 42 percent strongly agreed, and 38 percent agreed. In addition, 82 percent of the respondents feel that participating in Peer Resources helps them contribute to their school and 61 percent say it helps them contribute to their community. Four out of five report that the skills they learned in Peer Resources have helped them in school, family, and community situations.

An evaluation of the conflict resolution program, conducted in 1997 by Milbrey McLaughlin of Stanford University, revealed a 96 percent mediation success rate with very few repeat conflicts. Schools have also noted that students participating in Peer Resources take on leadership roles in the schools that extend beyond their roles as mediators or peer educators. After 9/11, for example, peer mediators took a lead role in creating a climate of tolerance in local high schools.

A less anticipated result of Peer Resources is the role it plays in establishing links between schools and community-based programs. SFEF has been partnering with other nonprofits to train youth working with peers in specific areas such as sexual harassment and homophobia, and to provide a range of program enhancements and additional outlets for building youth leadership. Thanks to its strong relationships with local organizations, SFEF has carved out a niche in helping San Francisco students develop leadership skills.

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Engaging Youth in Improving Educational Opportunities

Good Schools for All, Buffalo, NY

Challenge

When communities come together to discuss compelling community issues, young people are often at the table. Putting youth engagement at the center of community and school improvement efforts can be a critical factor in building momentum, identifying meaningful issues, and ensuring action.

Yet the best youth engagement plans will fall flat if communities do not have the training and experience to support and utilize young people in their role as critical stakeholders. Good Schools for All (GSFA) is getting young people involved through the *Project 540* model, an approach to engaging young people in decision making and community revitalization.

Strategic Intervention

Project 540, created by youth educators at Providence College and funded by the Pew Charitable Trusts, provides a vehicle and structure for students to bring peer-level discussions into policy-level environments. Students at schools around the country, including six in Buffalo, conduct focus groups with their peers, analyze school information, and create action plans for both building-level and citywide improvements.

LEF Work

The name, *Project 540,* reflects the idea that a community must come full circle, 360 degrees, and then go an additional 180 degrees further to engage young people effectively. The project generates commitment and engagement by going beyond conventional approaches to soliciting input from and involving youth in the decision-making process. The *540* model trains young people to facilitate focused conversations with peers, identify important issues, develop action plans, and present these plans to district decision-making bodies. Student leaders in participating schools identify school issues and take these issues to the student body, asking, "This is what we heard and these are the action steps we recommend based on our findings. Did we get it right?"

In spring 2003, GSFA worked with Buffalo area students to compile findings on student ideas and perceptions regarding school improvement efforts, and to provide opportunities for student voices to be heard in a local forum.

The report of the findings includes a summary of critical school issues, a list of academic supports young people need from adults, and the vision young people have for positive youth development. Students identified specific action items that

included increasing the student voice in policy-making decisions, following up on a prior agreement by the mayor to create a youth commission, and expanding the role of the inter-high-school council. Students also highlighted important issues that have yet to be addressed—equity within and among schools, outreach to youth who drop out of school, and the connection between school problems and the political disenfranchisement of certain voter populations.

GSFA's youth engagement efforts build on its work in *Project 540.* GSFA serves as a hub, facilitating connections between *Project 540* and other related community and statewide initiatives such as *Kids Voting* and the Campaign for Fiscal Equity (CFE). These initiatives provide a platform for connecting community concerns with school reform issues. *Kids Voting,* for example, provides teachers with curricula related to current elections, while CFE connects young people and parents to a critical statewide effort to change the state funding formula for schools.

GSFA's youth engagement work places young people at the center of several strategic interventions being implemented locally: community dialogue, constituency building, collaboration with districts, and policy analysis. GSFA former executive director Cara Stillman explains, "We see this work providing that core base of democratic skills, but we also see it as impacting schools. Young people are so often the object of reform. They need to be involved—they need to have the skills to make that happen and they need ownership of their schools."

Results

Focusing on youth engagement has had a significant impact on GSFA staff and on the organization as a whole. As Stillman puts it, "It's been a huge change in mindset for us. Once you actually internalize a belief that youth have a lot to give, the world opens up and you begin to see them as this huge untapped source of energy. One specific example of our shift: we now have two young people on our board." Stillman says this new focus has affected thoughts on hiring as well. "The ability to do youth engagement work will be an important factor in who GSFA hires."

In a June 2003 presentation to district personnel and other members of the community, Buffalo students made some specific requests. They asked for a more significant voice in decisions made at the building and district levels, and the superintendent made a commitment to work with them on strategies for implementation. They asked for a more concrete role in policymaking in the community, and they received a pledge from the city and county to create a youth commission.

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Youth Engagement **References**

Tools

Listening to Student Voices

A toolkit for K–12 educational leaders who want to include students in school improvement initiatives. An informational brochure, introductory booklet, overview video, and stories from principals, teachers, and students are included. Materials reflect the importance of student engagement:

- Students are important stakeholders in their own education.
- Student views are distinct from adult perspectives.
- Students involved in improvement initiatives reap numerous benefits.
- Students participating in a school's self-study workforce assist school improvement efforts.
- Committed students will move the process along.

Northwest Regional Education Laboratory ▪ 503 275 9500 ▪ www.nwrel.org/scpd/scc/studentvoices/

Meaningful Student Involvement—An Idea Guide for Schools

An exploration of meaningful roles and responsibilities for students in the classroom, at school, and in the district, with sections for students, teachers, building administrators, and district officials. Includes descriptions of student participation in action and a list of opportunities for students to affect school change. The guide looks at four outcomes of student involvement: improvement in students' overall well-being, behavior and values, academic achievement, and teacher quality.

Adam Fletcher ▪ www.bicyclingfish.com/MSIGuide.pdf

California State PTA Handbook

A plan of action for school officials and PTA members serious about youth involvement. Rationales for youth involvement and numerous examples of ways to promote projects that benefit and excite youth and adults. Includes a section on youth recruitment and retention.

California State PTA ▪ 213 620 1100 ▪ www.capta.org/sections/membership/student-involvement.cfm

Youth Engaged in Leadership and Learning (Y.E.L.L.): A Handbook for Supporting Community Youth Researchers

Guidance for those training young people to become active contributors to decision-making processes in their communities. Lessons on research methods, analytical tools, and presentation skills can be adapted to meet community needs and interests. Lesson plans, worksheets, and sample documents are included.

John W. Gardner Center for Youth and Their Communities, Stanford University ▪ 650 723 1137 ▪ http://gardnercenter.stanford.edu/resources/handbook/index.shtml

Resources

What Kids Can Do

Projects that combine powerful learning with public purpose, focusing on the value of young people working with teachers and other adults. The website features young people's stories, resources for teachers, and examples of promising initiatives and of young people's work.

What Kids Can Do ▪ 401 247 7665 ▪ www.wkcd.org

www.SoundOut.org

An online resource center promoting meaningful student involvement in school change, with tools and resources for constructive, diverse, and student-inclusion dialogues. The site includes an interactive map of youth activism efforts across the United States and Canada.

Sound Out ▪ 360 753 2686 ▪ www.SoundOut.org

At The Table

An online clearinghouse for youth involvement advocates and practitioners. Features include a calendar of events, news from the youth participation field, discussion boards, user-posted handouts and links, plus an online workroom for youth advocates.

Innovation Center for Community and Youth Development ▪ 301 270 1700 ▪ www.atthetable.org

Youth Action for Educational Change: An Annotated Bibliography and Resource Guide

Stories of youth involved in educational change, featuring studies, reflections, frameworks, and how-to guides. Publications and articles speak directly to the work of young people as school reformers.

Forum for Youth Investment ▪ 202 207 3333 ▪ www.forumforyouthinvestment.org

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Our Vision

Every day, in every community, *every* child
in America benefits from a quality public education.

Our Mission

To build public demand and mobilize resources for
quality public education for *all* children through a national
constituency of local education funds and individuals.

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